

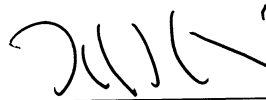
RICE UNIVERSITY
APPROPRIATING ARCHITECTURE

by

ALLISON C. ZUCHMAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

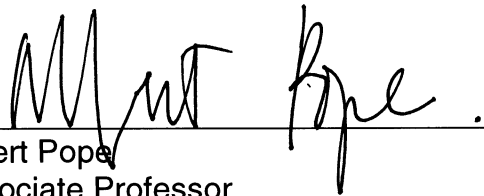
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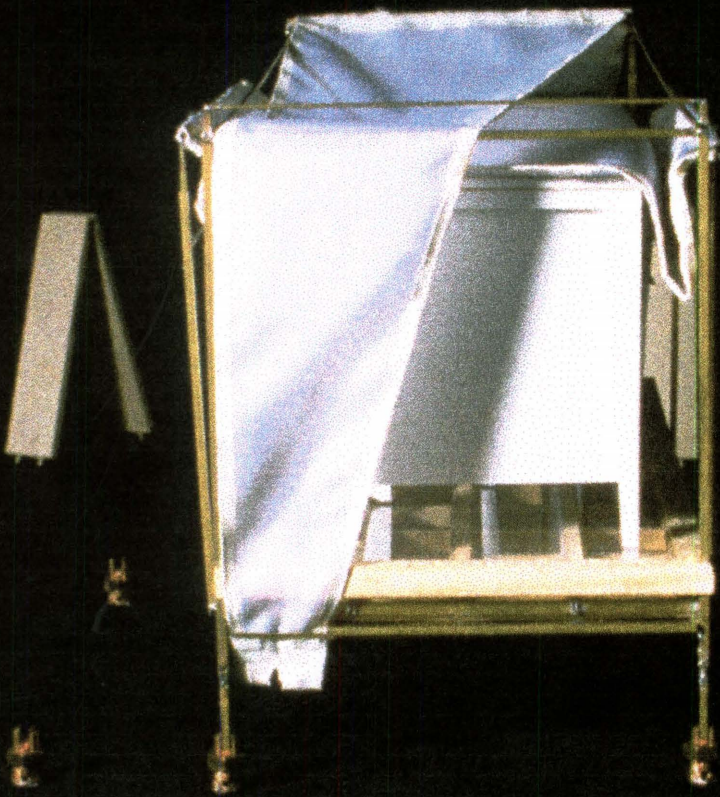


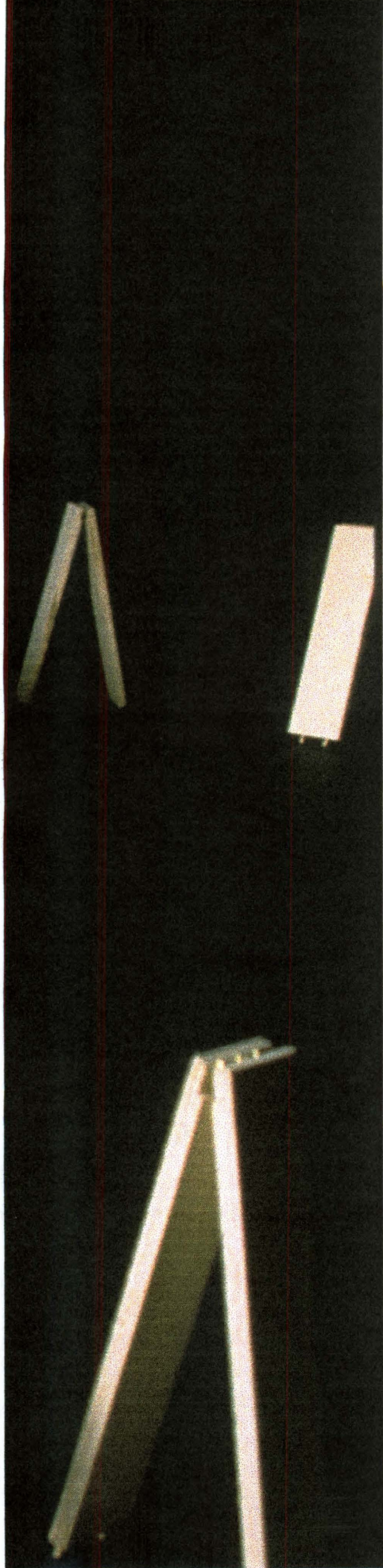
Albert Pope
Associate Professor
Rice School of Architecture

Houston, Texas
April 1997

Allison C. Zuchman

APPROPRIATING
ARCHITECTURE





Exercise 1a.

Documentary photography seeks to appreciate a transitory community of people in relation to their changing physical, economical, and social surroundings.

Exercise 1b.

Documentary photography records how people arrange objects and inhabit spaces.

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Allison C. Zuchman

Director: John Casbarian

Readers: Elysabeth Gamard, Albert Pope

APPROPRIATING ARCHITECTURE

Exercise 2.

Architecture is a framework, a context, which should not alienate people but allow people to identify with their environment and participate in its creation.

Exercise 3.

The program is a Jewish place of worship for a congregation that has no home. The

program incorporates a double theology - that of the Tabernacle and of the synagogue. The Tabernacle was a portable temple that the Israelites carried through the desert in Biblical times on their exodus from Egypt to Israel. Unique in its own physical and temporal sphere, the Tabernacle was mobile and its placement was temporary. A synagogue is the modern-day Jewish house of worship.

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL ARCHITECTURE

Documentary Photography

Social Documentary Photography

Social Architecture

Building As Context

Process

A DISPLACED CONGREGATION

Tamid

Ya arkenu

Halacha

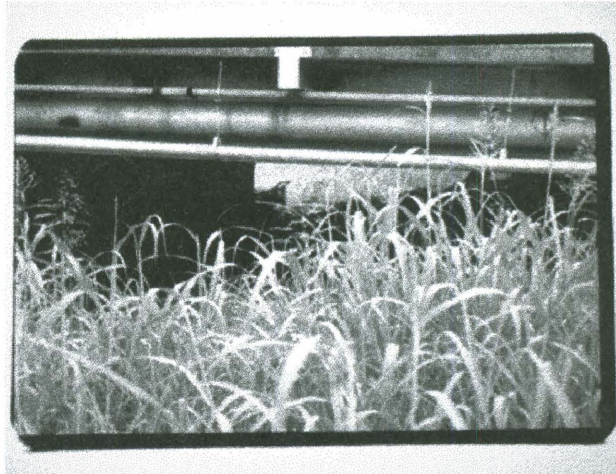
Miskanot

Endnotes

Bibliography

Extended Bibliography

Exercise 1a.
Braes Bayou, Houston, TX

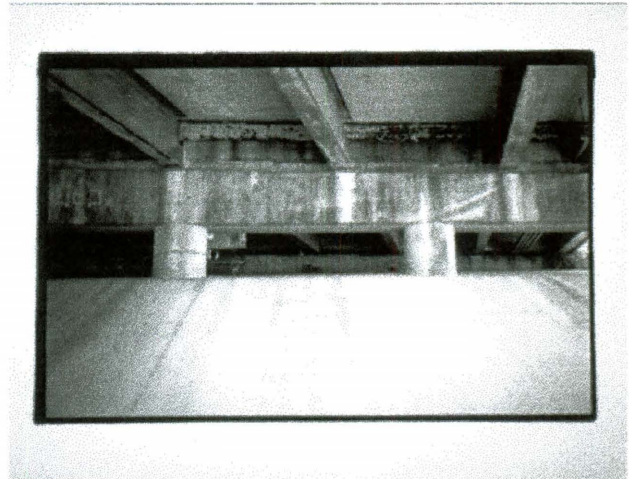


Documentary Photography and Social Architecture

Recognition of the potential in the ordinary suggests an alternative way to appreciate an old reality and through that appreciation construct a new reality.

Documentary Photography

Documentary photography seeks to discover the aesthetic value in the incidental detail, the spontaneous expression, the anonymous act.¹ The duplicate world created through documentary photography reproduces and reshapes facts from everyday life. Each photograph



refers to a nonrepeatable event in time which has been reconstructed through the eye of the photographer. Previously, each image belonged to a larger picture which was cropped by the camera. Presently, each image belongs to a larger system of the photographic collection, photographic editing,² of society.

The camera frames events, actions, and relationships, fragmenting the world into details. The photographer's collecting (editing) of these details promotes a habit of seeing through discontinuity. Each image, though ultimately part of a larger whole, is separated from the next and from its original context. The value of an

Hermann Park, Houston, TX

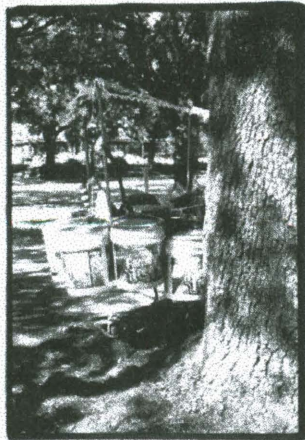


image as a detail is its ability to communicate information. Each individual photograph, a captured slice of time, makes visible relationships that are often overlooked in the continuous flow of the everyday world.

Social Documentary Photography

Social documentary photography assumes that by making plain facts comprehensible and available to more people social action will follow. The photograph as a social act awakens the viewer's awareness of other people and places. The viewer gains a sense of consciousness and

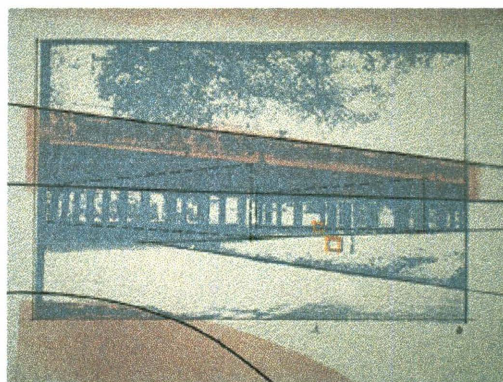
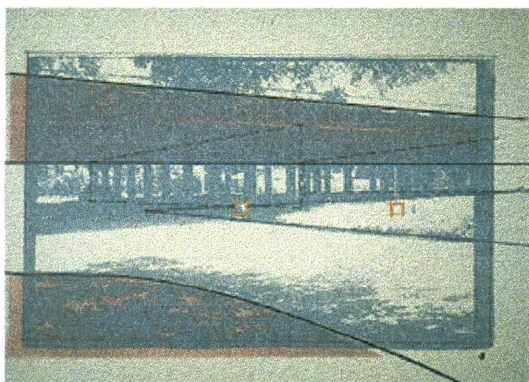


concern, an imaginative empathy, for the pictured others. Though not attempting to be a replacement for preferred actual experiences, documentary photography educates through visual experiences informing people about conditions they might not encounter in their everyday life. Unlike television and film which reduce vision to a flow of split-second glimpses, photography isolates static images. Photographs invite contemplation and allow the viewer an infinite amount of time to experience each individual image.

Social documentary photography is concerned with not only communication but also response. The largest

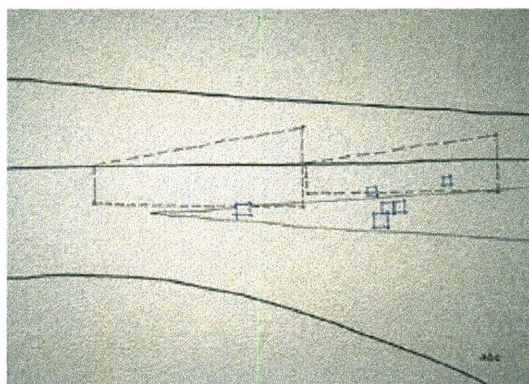
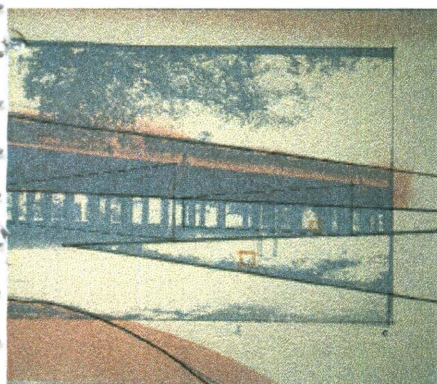
Exercise 1b.

Site 1 : underneath Hwy 59 overpass, Houston, TX



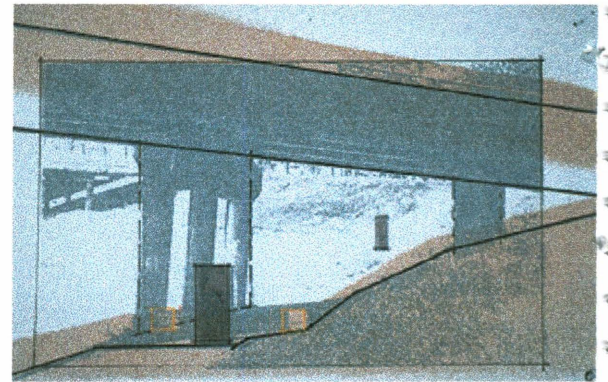
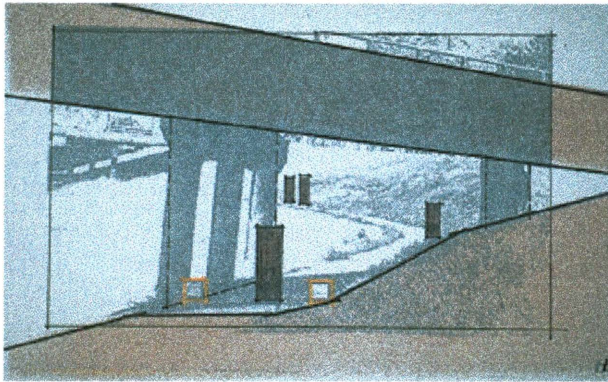
American social documentary photography project, produced under the direction of Roy Stryker and the Farm Security Administration (FSA), documented the human condition of migrant farm workers in the 1930's. In the tradition of documentary photography, the photographs expressed relationships and patterns of people's lives with dignity and respect through the factual descriptions of the photograph. Interrelationships of problems were expressed through their impact on individuals. The universality of the situation of despair was expressed through specific circumstances, spontaneous expressions, and anonymous acts. The intention of the project was to activate social reform.

Site 2 : Braes Bayou,



All documentary photography, however, does not claim to be social. Walker Evans in particular, though interested in similar conditions as other documentary photographers, claimed his photographs were concerned with only the visual aspects of a scene, not the social concerns. Suspicious of social reform and government action as means of control, Evans at his best presents to viewers the dry bones of fact, without comment, almost without thought.³ Evans photographs are perhaps the closest of any documentary photographer to impersonal, precise, and literal photographic description. The images are straightforward in approach through subtle overcast

Houston, TX

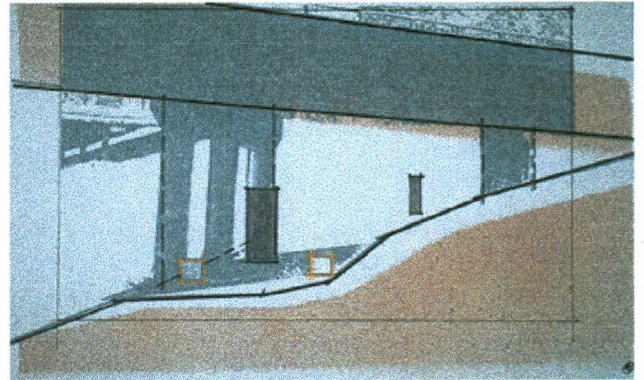
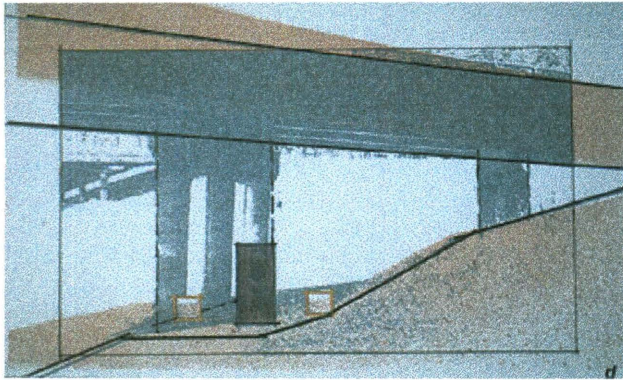


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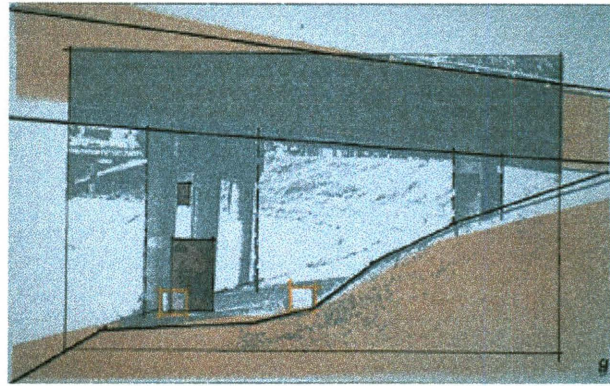
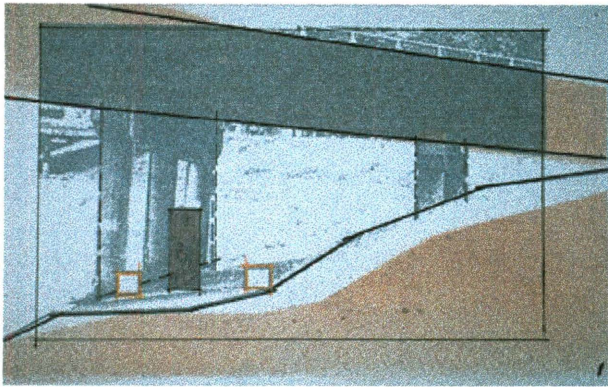
lighting, static frontal shots, and an almost compulsive attention to detail. Evans intended his photographs to appear as incontrovertible records of fact.⁴

A gap will always exist between images and their assigned meanings. The relationship cannot be trapped with a single interpretation. Documentary photography does not claim, and could not claim, to be a completely objective practice but does claim to represent the subjects of photographs in a straightforward, precise, clear manner (as the image appears through the camera without manipulation). Walker Evans did not attempt to solve social problems or attempt to depict a society in need of



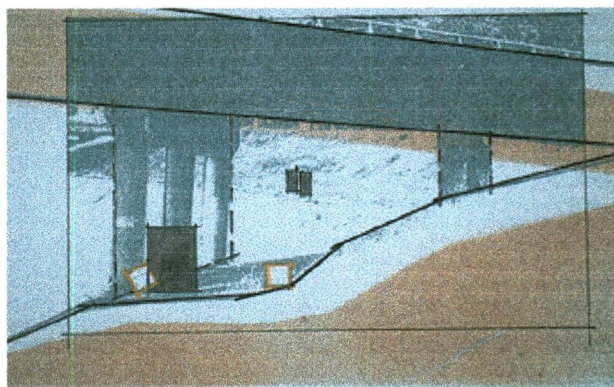
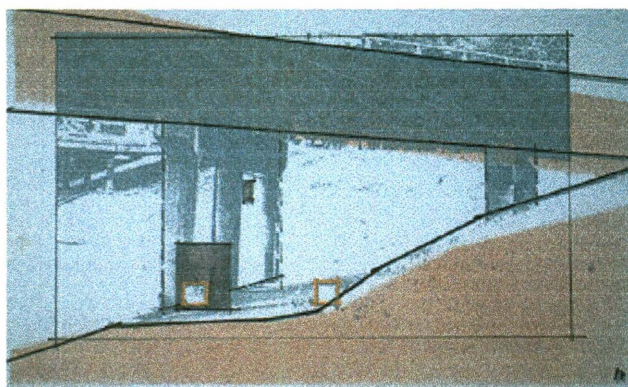
change. He was concerned with depicting details and relationships between objects (formal issues) as an anonymous photographer. Walker Evans is known for his impersonal, somewhat mysterious, eye for detail.

The strength of documentary photography, regardless of the many interpretation and presentation possibilities, is the ability to reshape existing elements. Documentary photography explains ordinary conditions of ordinary people and the possibilities of their application. Education of a past reality, through documentary photography, suggests the construction of a new physical reality in the present time.



Social Architecture

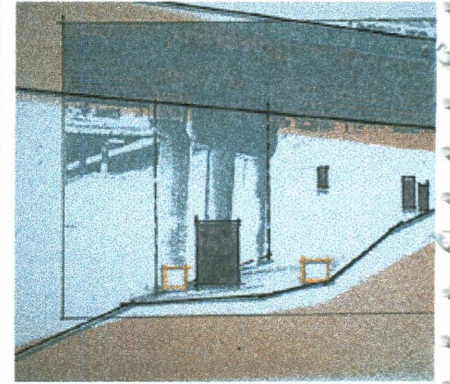
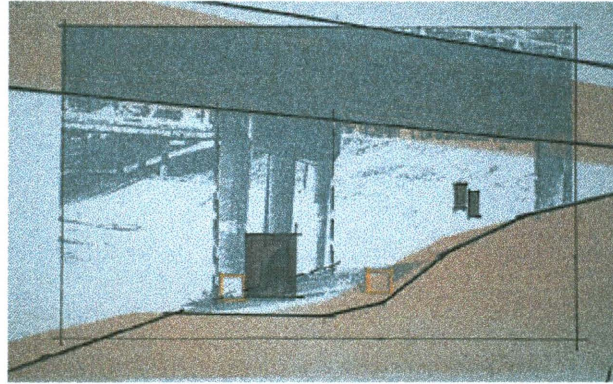
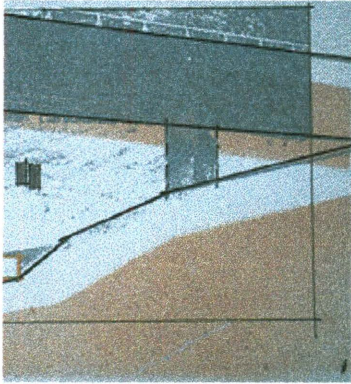
Social architecture, architecture which responds humanely to the need and desires of its users, concerns ordinary people in their everyday lives. People need to be recognized as individuals in particular contexts. Human needs have to be understood and studied within the framework of each design problem.⁵ Architecture exceeds all other arts in its size and social effect. Public architecture especially provides the setting for society and forms an integral part of the fabric of daily life.⁶ Architecture should be an educational, social, and



participatory project. The architect should enable people to identify with and participate in the creation of their environments.

Building as Context

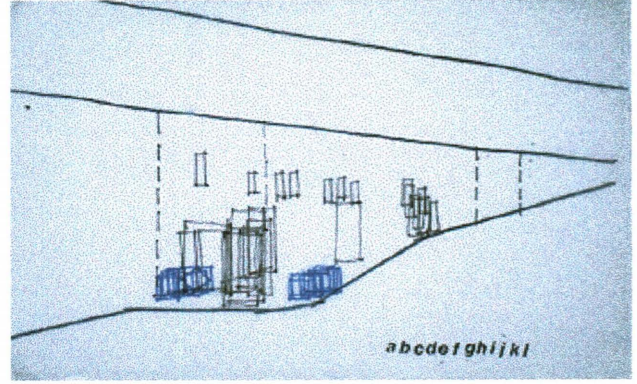
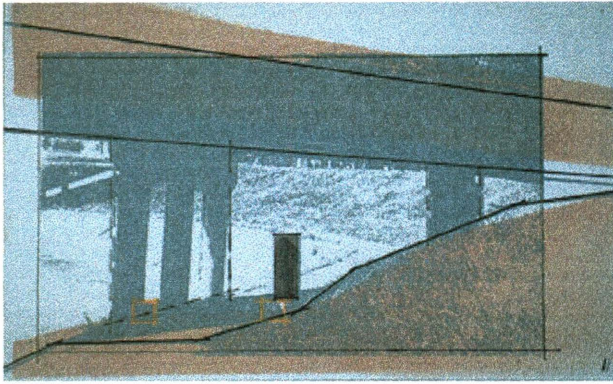
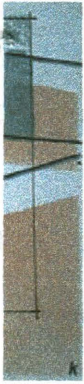
Architects appropriate physical contexts with buildings - with objects. These buildings should be considered another type of context, a context which can be appropriated by the people who inhabit them. The architect's appropriation of the site should stimulate the users' appropriation of the architecture. A building should refer to people through its details and



spaces. Architecture should encourage participation. Architecture is a framework, a framework for an event.

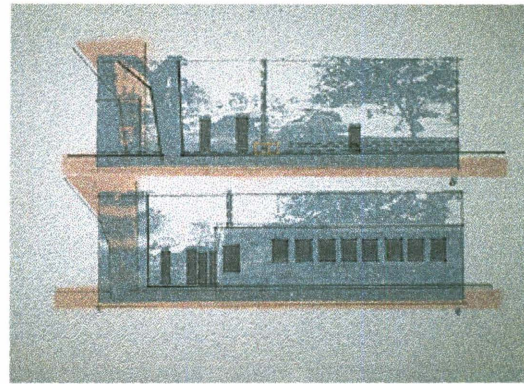
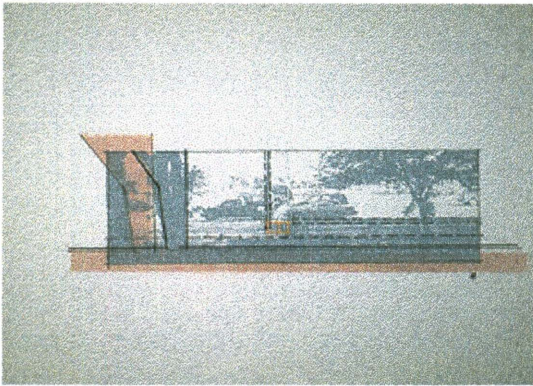
Process

Architecture needs to directly address the process of design, not only the end product. Architecture must embrace the whole design process - taking human needs, human activities and a human scale as its starting point.⁷ Architecture should challenge people to appreciate, to adapt to, to participate in today's changing society not only through understanding the technology but through understanding people and their



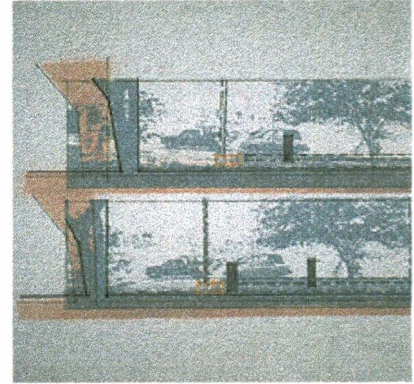
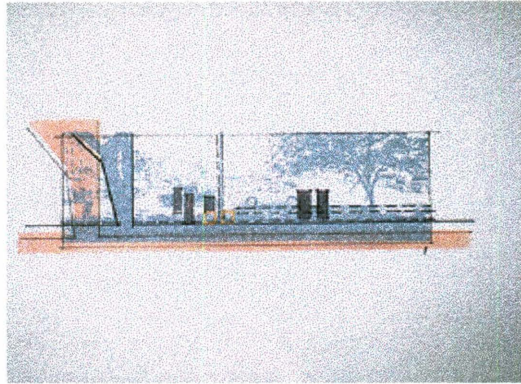
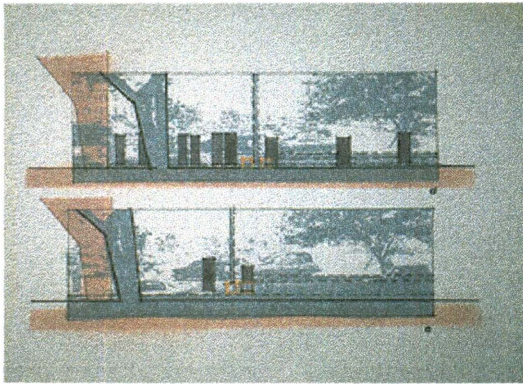
relation to the situation. The architect's role is not to create universal solutions which appropriate changing societies, but to program architecture which accommodates individual users of a particular changing society.

Site 3 : Metro Stop @ Travis St. and Clay St., Houston, TX



A Displaced Congregation

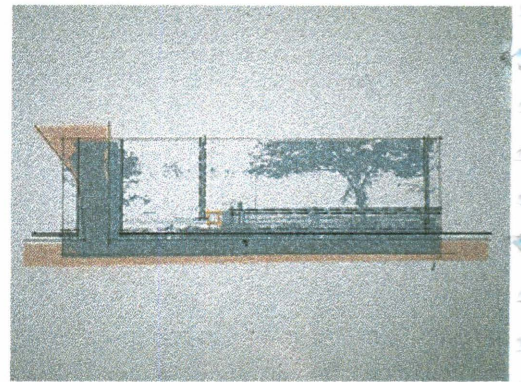
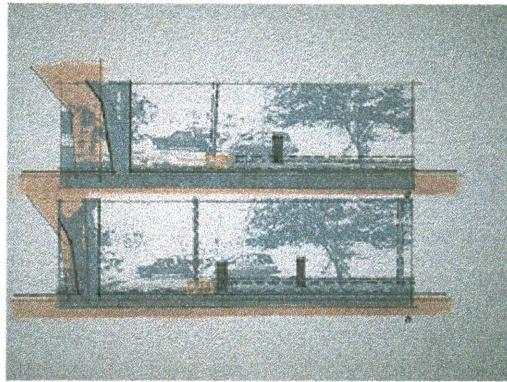
The program is a Jewish place of worship for a congregation that has no home. The program incorporates a double theology - that of the Tabernacle and of the synagogue. The Tabernacle was a portable temple that the Israelites carried through the desert in Biblical times on their Exodus from Egypt to Israel. A synagogue is the modern-day Jewish house of worship.



Tamid (time, regularity. Hebrew)

Ya arkenu (he shall set it in order. Hebrew)

The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar based on the monthly and daily cycles of the moon. The new moon marks the beginning of a Hebrew month. Sundown marks the beginning of a Hebrew day. The phases of the moon - the waxing and waning - emphasize a sense of becoming. The recurring cycles, as reflected in the Hebrew calendar, comfort the Israelites during times of persecution by sustaining the notion of return, of renewal, of redemption.



The holy days of the Jewish calendar create the master code of Judaism, telling and retelling the story of the Jewish people. (The pattern of the holidays is not fixed or closed, the pattern is still unfolding as time progresses and new sacred days arise.) By remembering and observing the Jewish holy days, the idea of redemption is kept alive. The holy days restage the great events in Jewish history, validating hope and sustaining spiritual life. Physical life gains a dimension of depth. An enclave of renewal, of revelation, of ritual, of regularity, is carved out of the present realm of time allowing people to step out of the world and participate in an alternate reality. Great events are car-



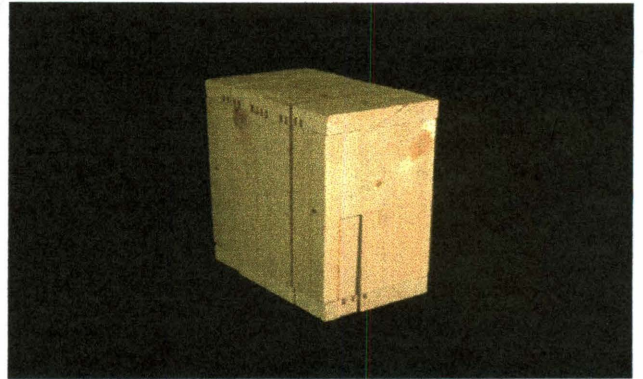
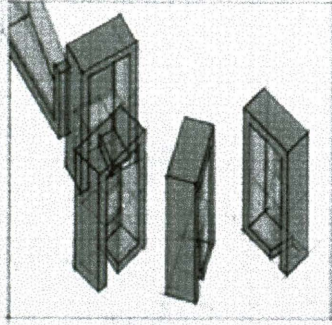
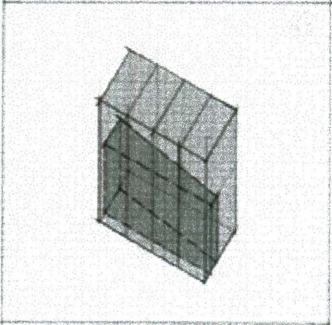
ried in tandem with the present, allowing hope for the future to also exist. The holy days range from Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement, one of the highest holidays occurring once a year, to Shabbat (the Sabbath, occurring once a week), to everyday rituals.

Miskanot (tabernacle. Hebrew)

Halacha (the Jewish way of life; walking, the way, sustained. Hebrew)

The historic condition of the Jewish people has been that of exile and displacement. The years of exile and displacement, in both biblical and modern times, has

Exercise 2
Box 1

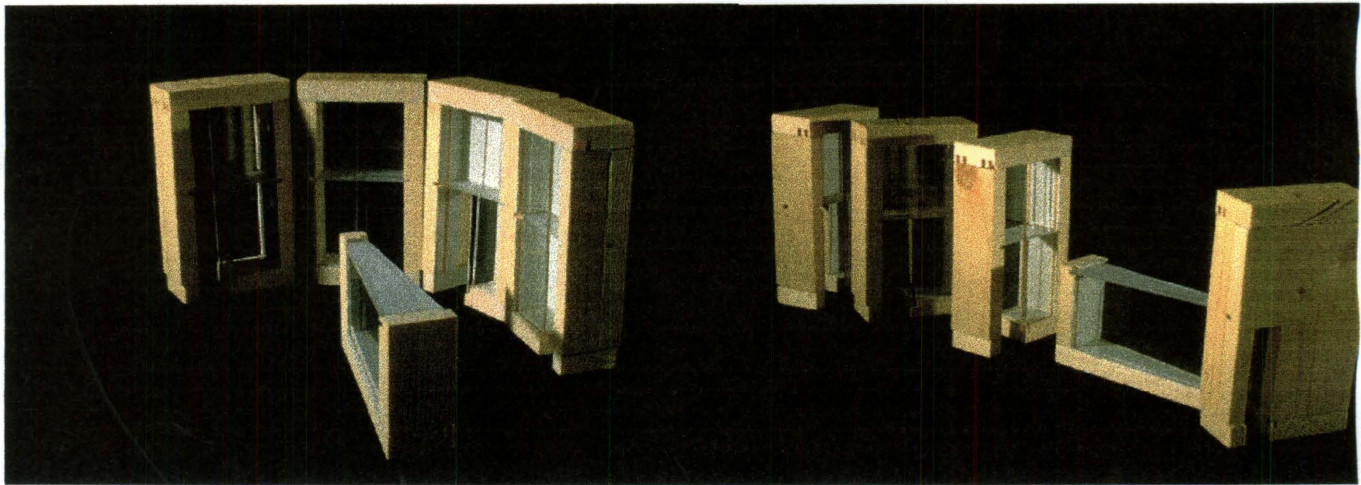


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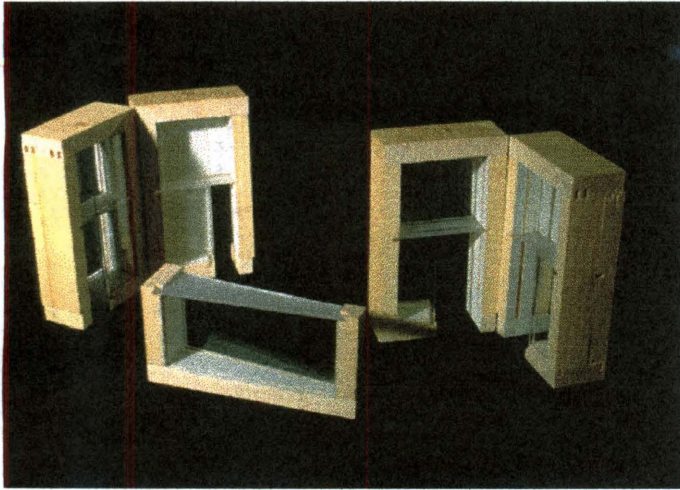
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strengthened the conviction that G-d is not limited to one place or country. The Jewish people's only permanent home has been the Sacred Text, the Torah. Revision and reinterpretation of this text has been the only anchor of a people displaced in space.

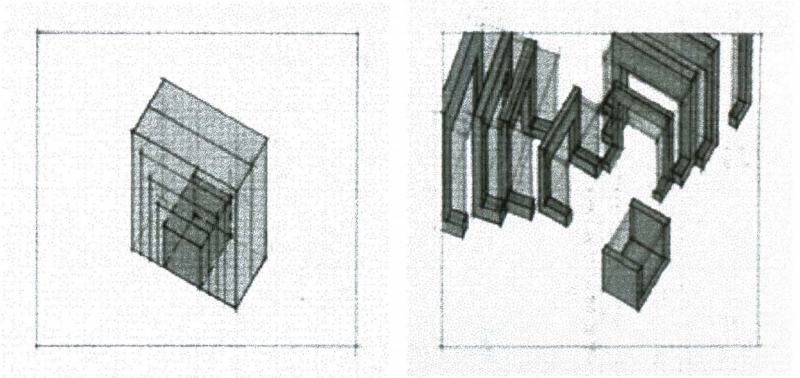
In biblical times the Tabernacle was G-d's portable dwelling place serving the entire Israelite community as they moved together through the desert. The Tabernacle was the centralized temple where sacraficial offerings were made by high priests. As the the Israelites began to disperse, a permanent Temple (single House of G-d) was built in Jerusalem. Synagogues were established as



assembly places for those who lived far from the Temple in Jerusalem. After the Temple was destroyed by invaders (for the final time and not to be rebuilt), synagogues became the primary assembly places for the Israelites and the primary worship places. Today synagogues serve as decentralized houses of prayer for the many Jewish communities scattered throughout the world. The synagogue is a house of the people where G-d may be petitioned directly through prayers and ceremonies. The portable building type of the Tabernacle truly represented the Jewish condition and the mobility of their Sacred text. The decentralized building type of the synagogue truly represents the modern needs of the

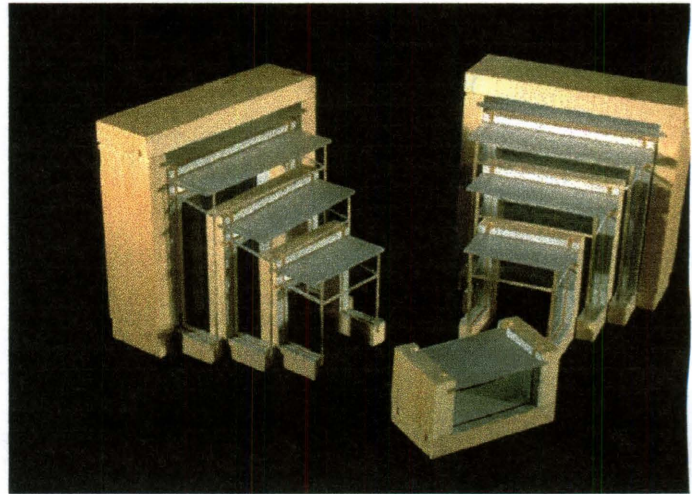
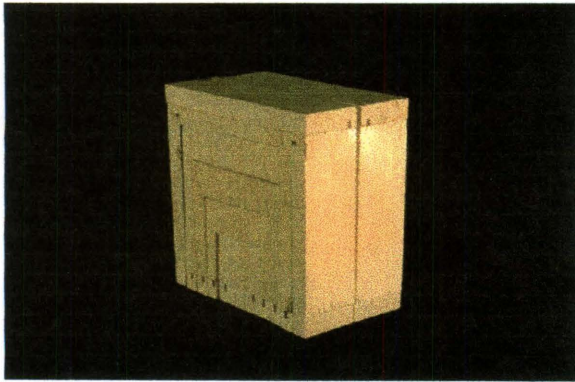


Box 2

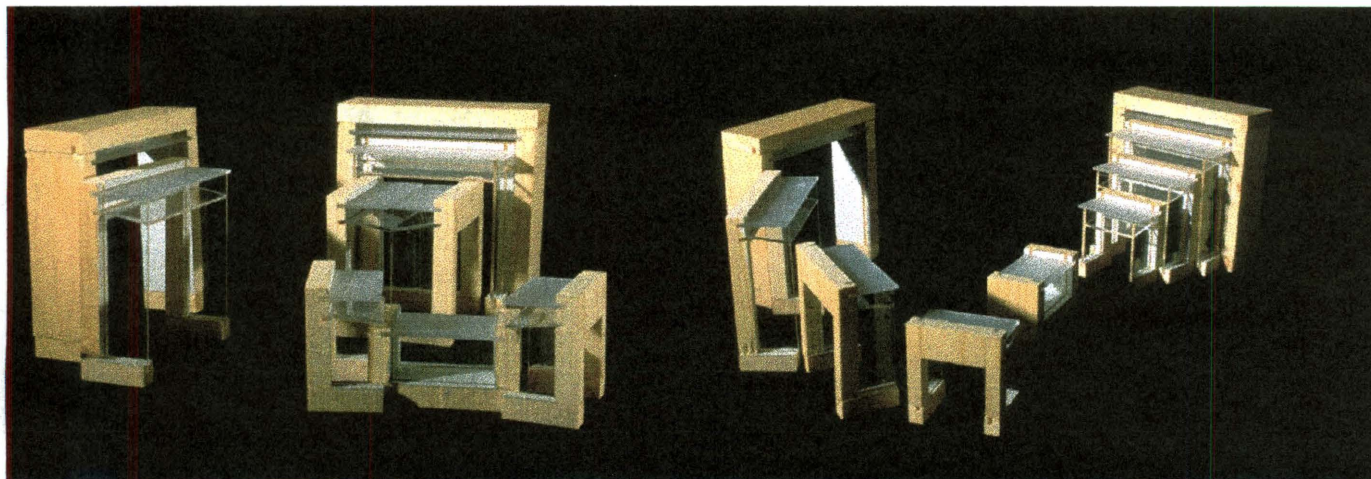


dispersed Jewish population.

The Tabernacle, a portable temple, reflected the nomadic (or semi-nomadic) conditions of the early stages of Israelite history. The Tabernacle was erected at Mt. Sinai, transported through the desert, and brought to the conquered land of Canaan (Israel). Unique in its own physical and temporal sphere, the tabernacle was mobile and its placement was temporary. Distanced and isolated from surroundings, the tabernacle provided divine inspiration to the Jewish people while on their passage to the promised land.



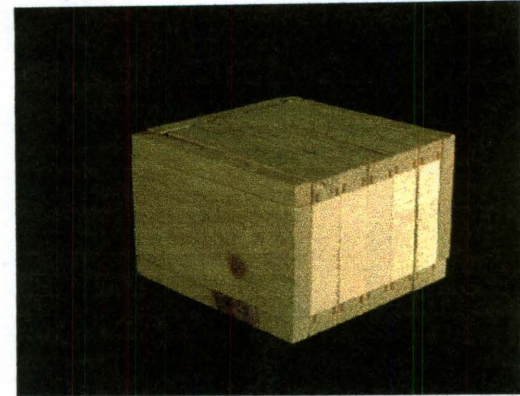
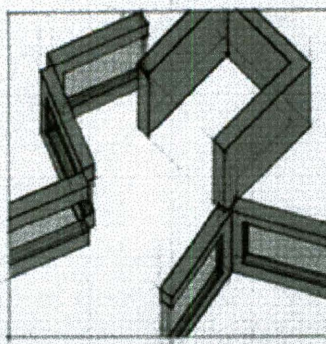
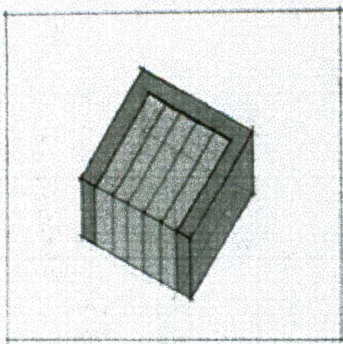
Though not located on a fixed site, the tabernacle did express permanence - permanence of time, of ceremony, of man. The rituals and events held in the tabernacle (in temples and in modern-day synagogues) were not continuous and uninterrupted, but cyclical. Ritual acts were repeated at regular intervals and at fixed times. A typological unity was created by the regularity of the rituals and by their attention to human nature. A rhythm was established. This rhythm (ritual) is the foundation of the Jewish religion allowing a wandering people who may not have a permanent home or a permanent temple to always have a fixed spiritual support. By an act of will, a community creates a sacred time and place and



agrees to live by its rules. The Hebrew word *Halacha* is translated as "the Jewish way of life." The Hebrew roots of the word *halacha* can be translated as "walking, the way, sustained."

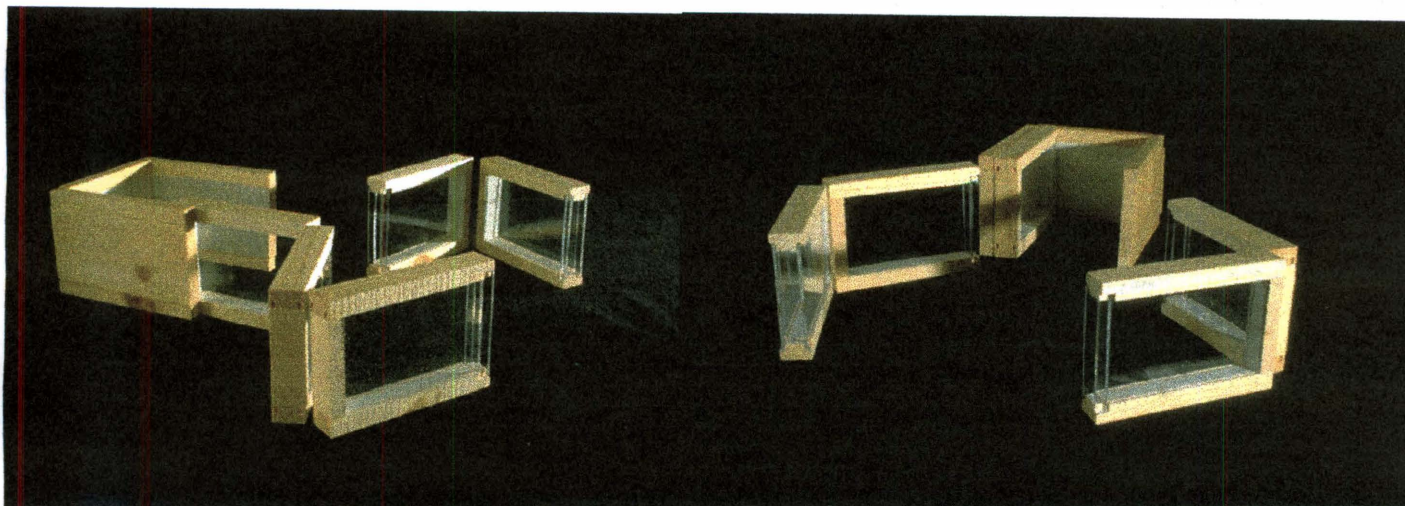
The tabernacle was similar to a tent in structure - hangings were spread over temporary walls made of wooden planks. The planks were in rows on the north, south, and west sides of the Tabernacle. Each plank had two tenons (or fingers) which were mortised (or dropped) into sockets of silver anchored into the ground. The planks were set in place side-by-side and connected by bars suspended along the width of the walls. The eastern

Box 3

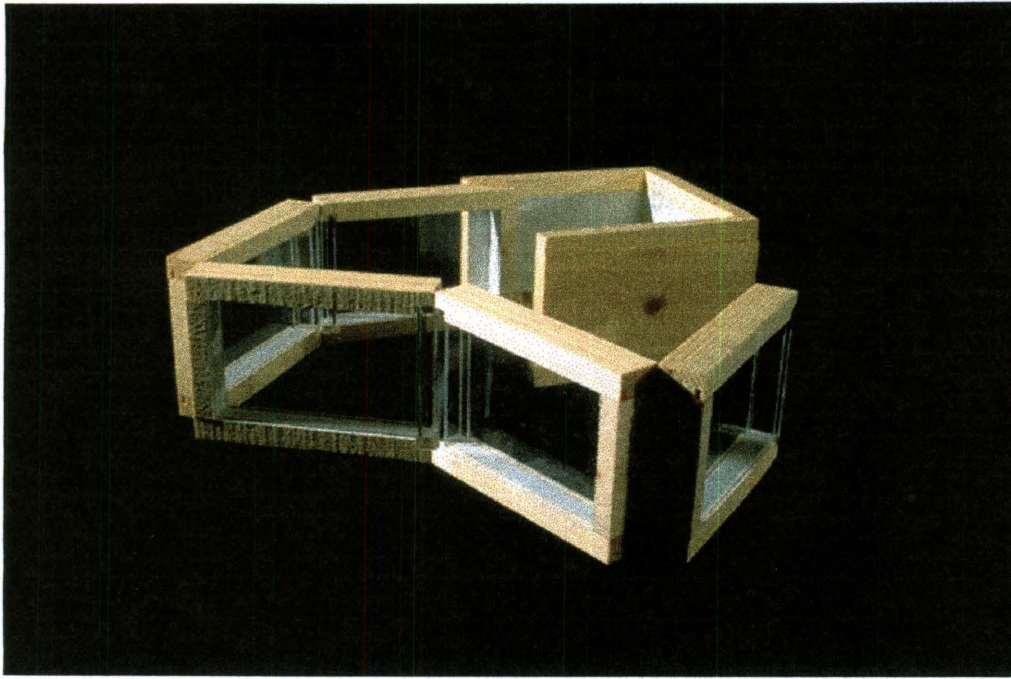


side, the entrance to the Tabernacle which faced Israel, was left open. Over the walls were spread four layers of curtains, from outermost to innermost as follows: badgers' skins, rams' skins, goats' hair, and linen. Three special linen hangings were located one each at the gate of the court, the entrance to the tabernacle, and the entrance to the inner sanctum. Linen cords passed over the outside covering and were fastened to brass pins which were driven into the ground.

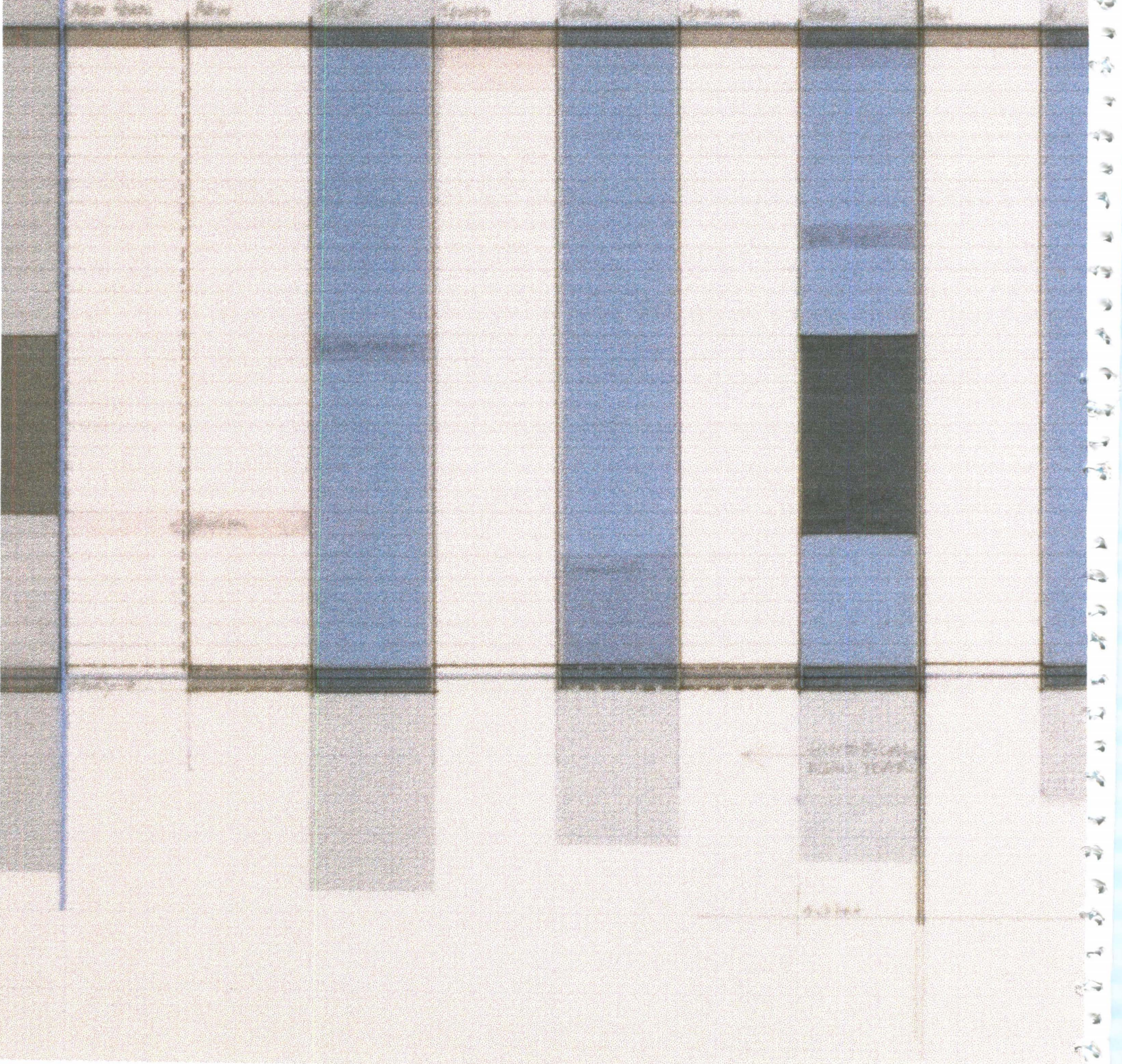
The Tabernacle, set on an eastern axis, faced Israel. The Tabernacle was divided into two distinct parts: the inner sanctum and the outer sanctum. The inner sanctum,

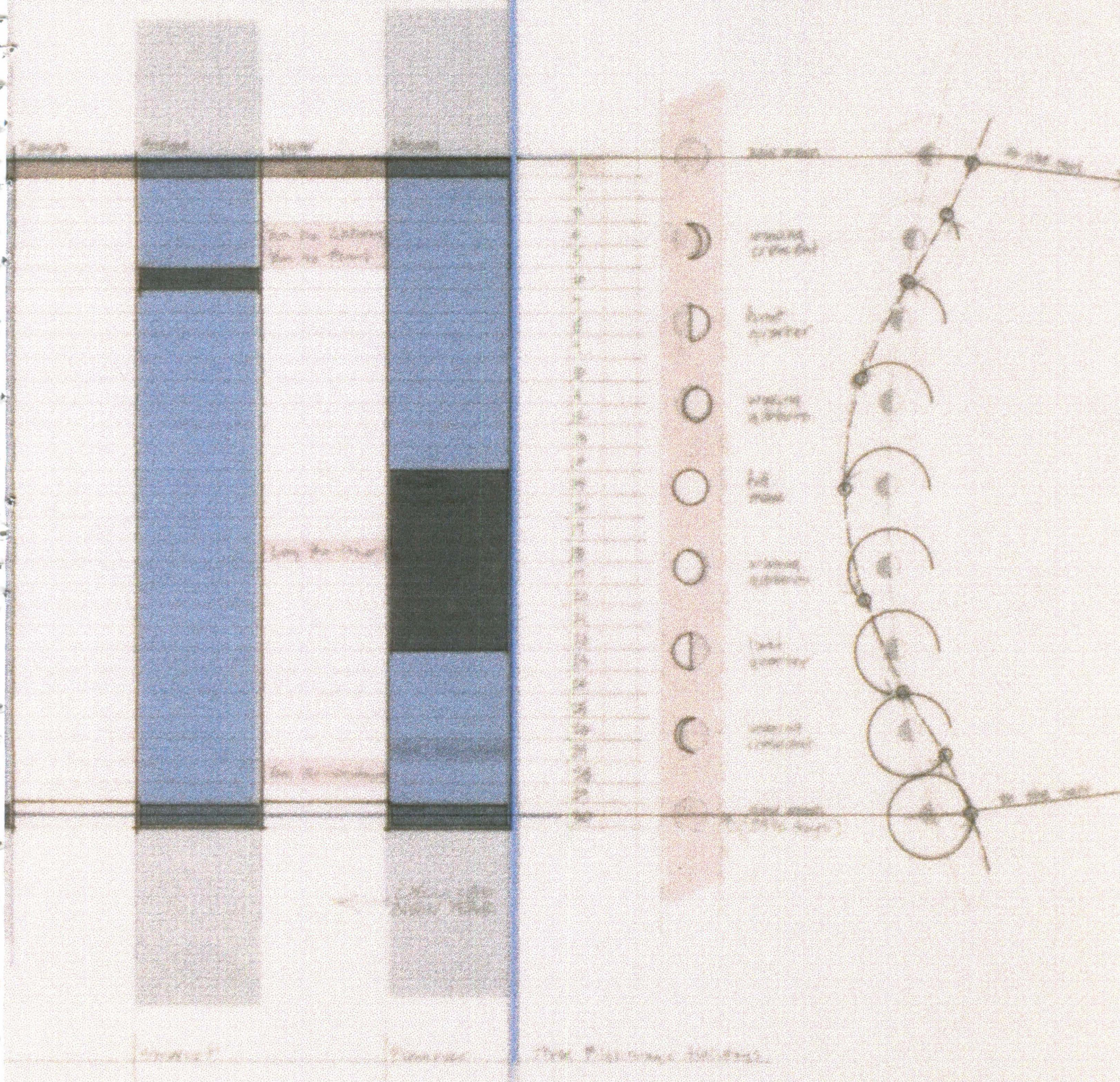


the smaller division, contained the Ark and its Covering. The outer sanctum, the larger division, contained the Altar of Incense, the Table of the Shewbread, and the Lampstand. Four pillars and one of three special linen hangings divided the space between the two sanctums. The entrance on the eastern end of the tabernacle was marked by five pillars and the second special hanging. A court, constructed of sixty pillars and a linen fence, surrounded the Tabernacle. The Laver (washing basin) and the Altar were located in the court. Four pillars with the third special hanging marked the entrance to the court.



Exercise 3





1998

Dec

Nov

Oct

Sept

Aug

July

June

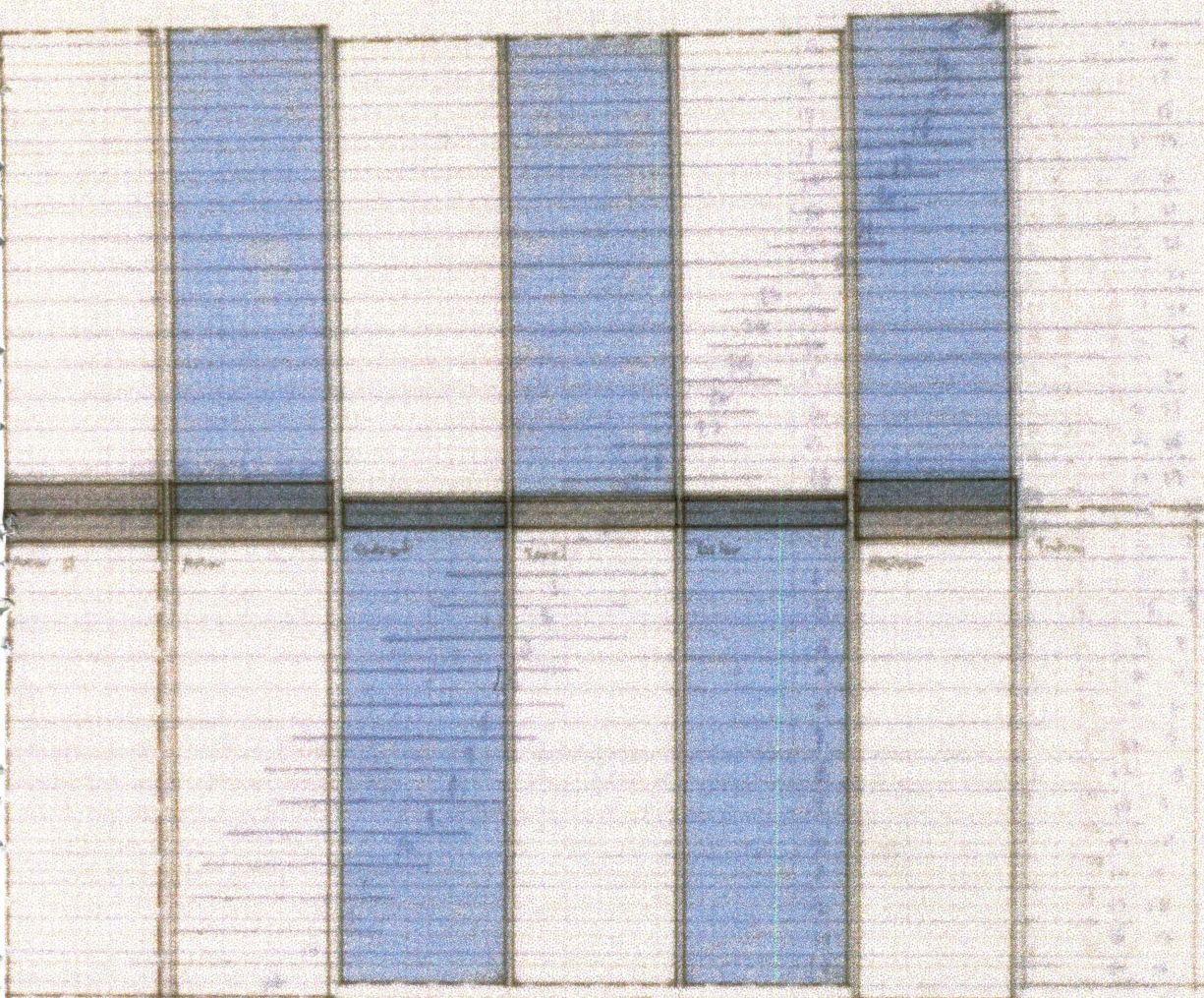
May










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June 21

June 15

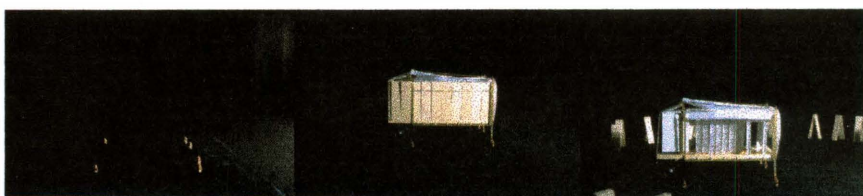
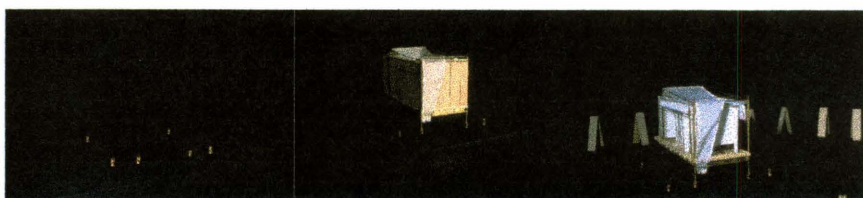
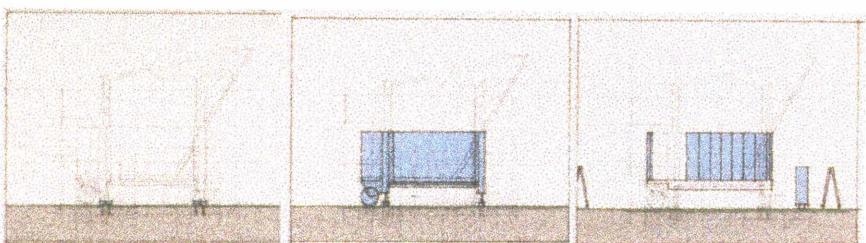
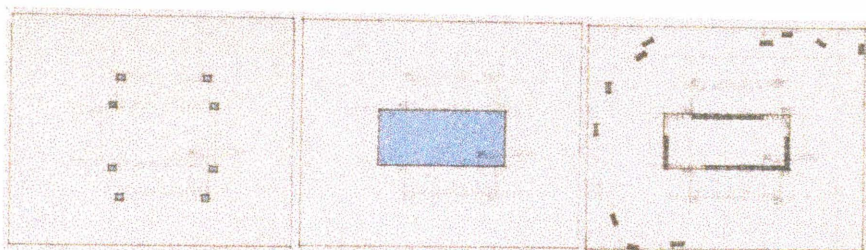
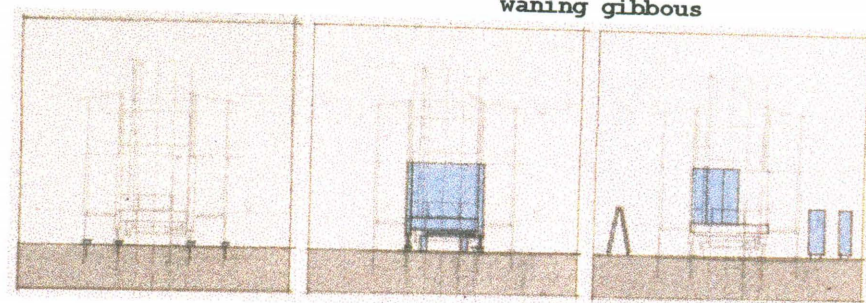
June 28



-  full moon
-  3rd quarter
-  1st quarter
-  second of moon
-  new moon
-  waning crescent
-  1st quarter
-  waning gibbous
-  full moon

full moon

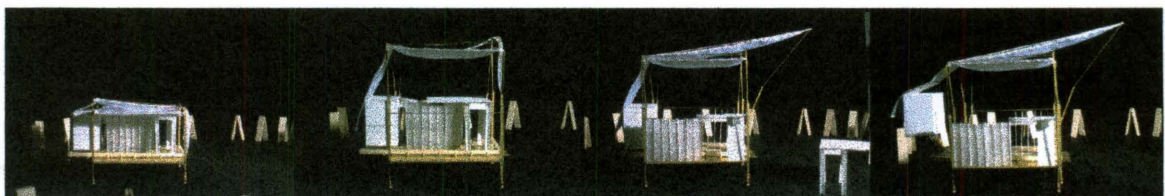
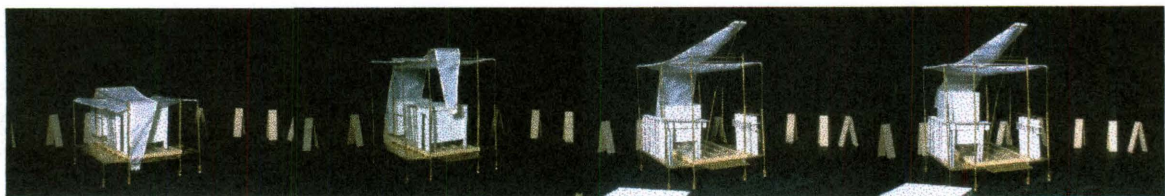
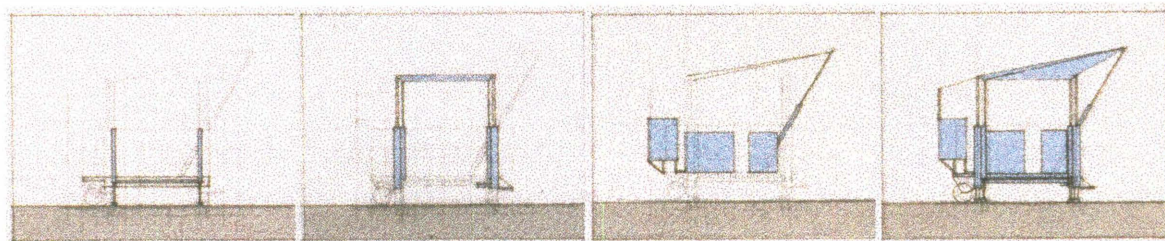
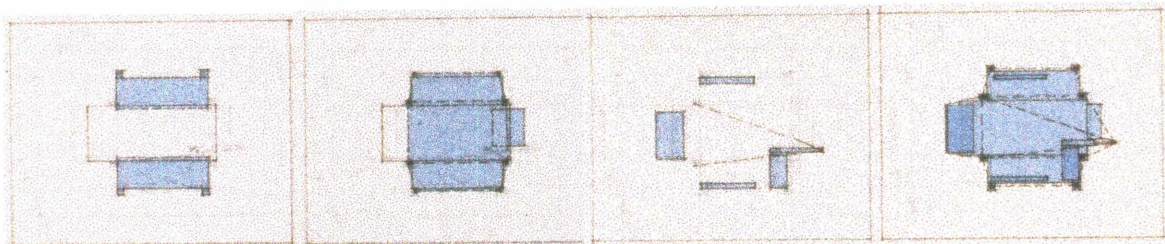
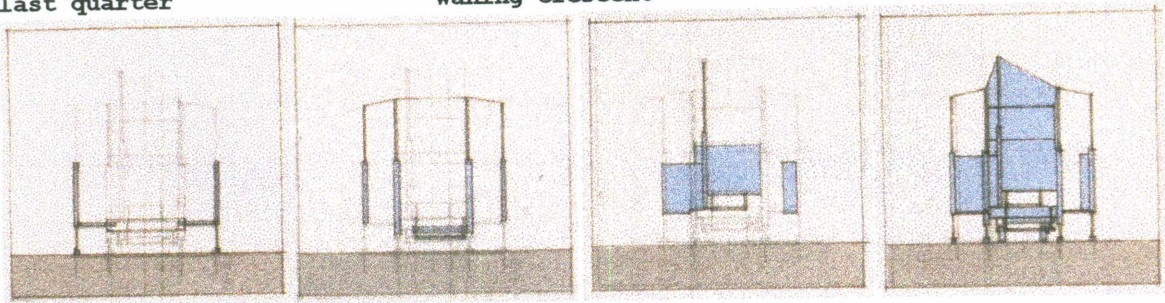
waning gibbous

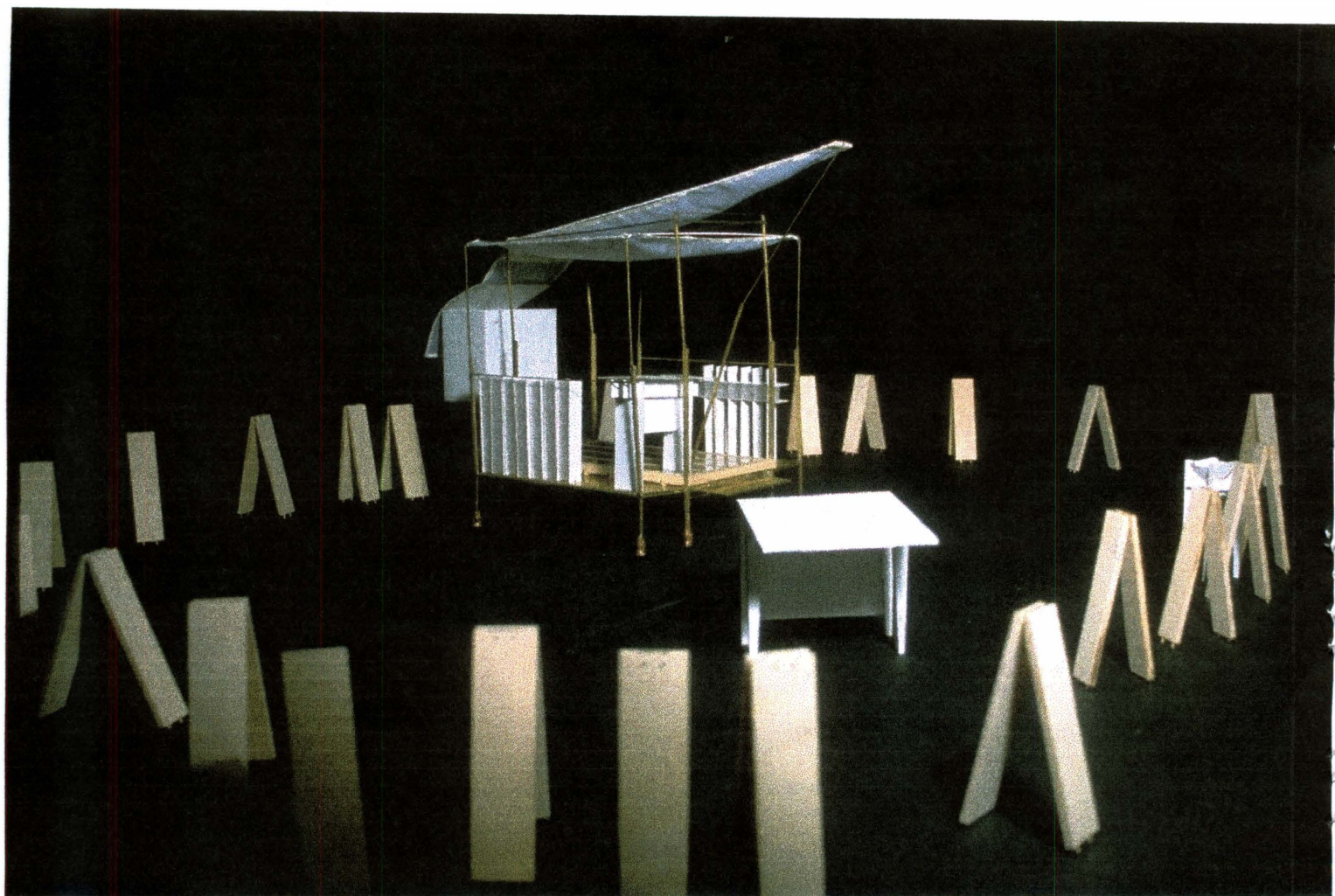


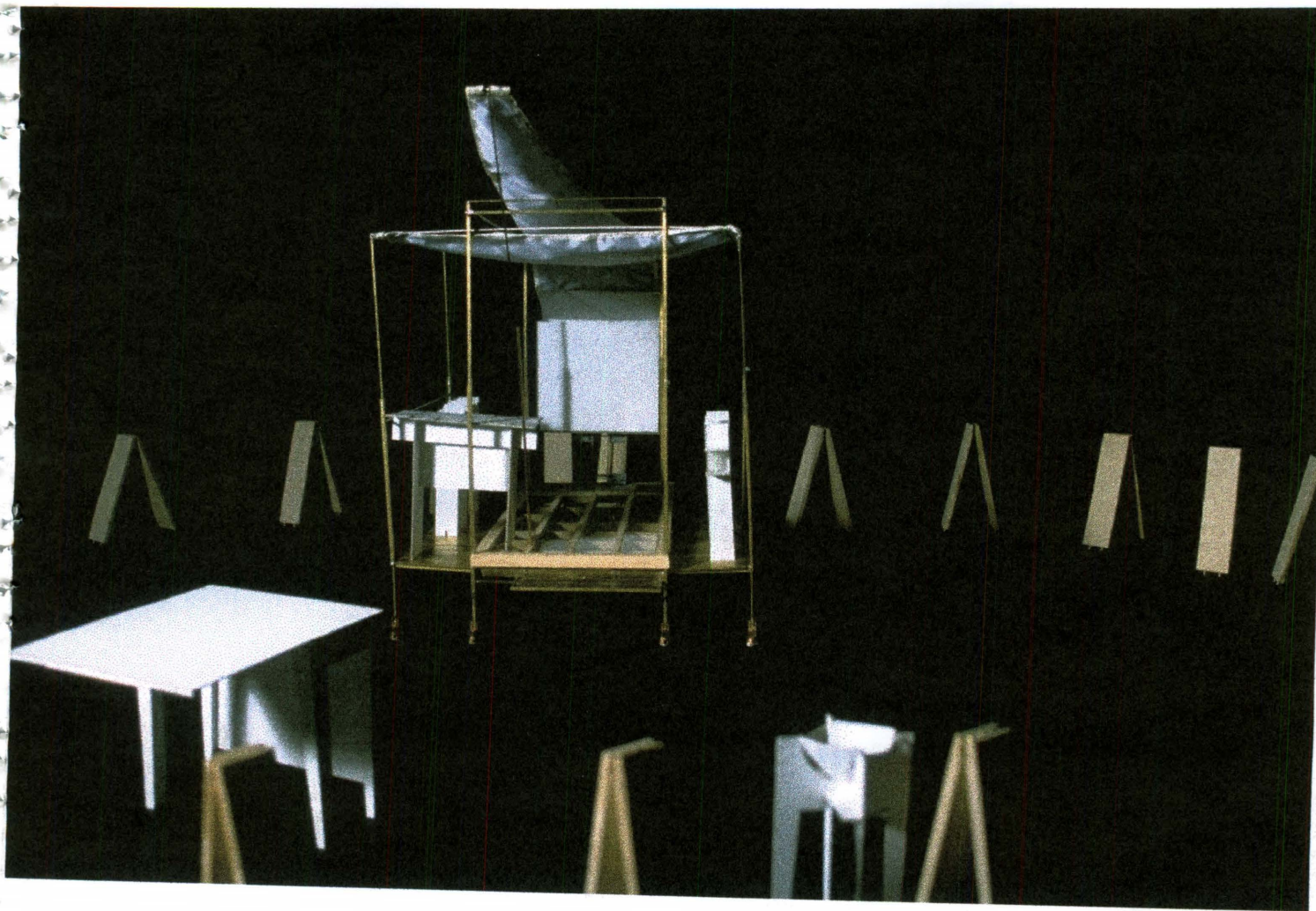
last quarter

waning crescent

new moon



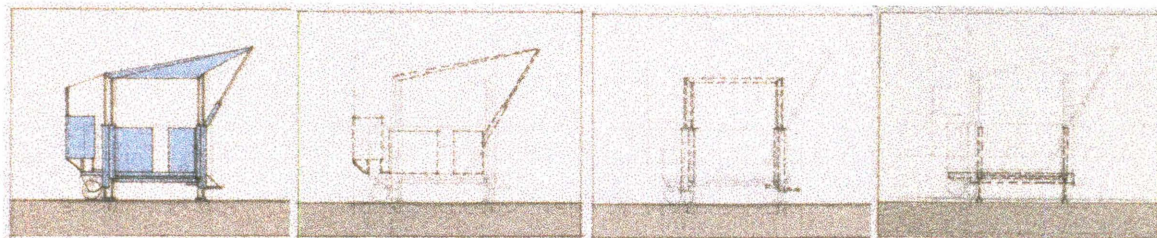
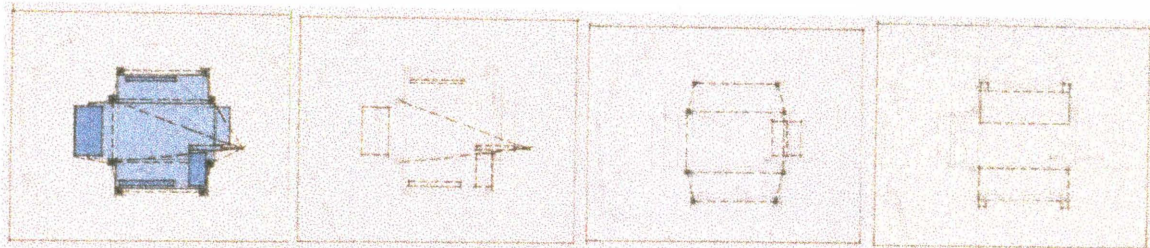
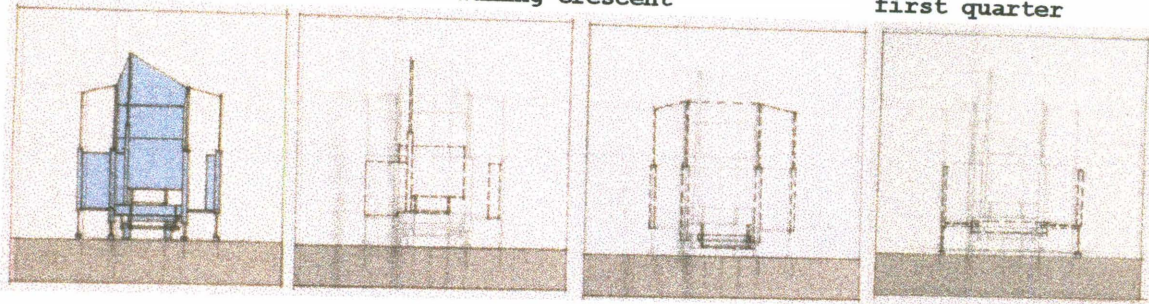




new moon

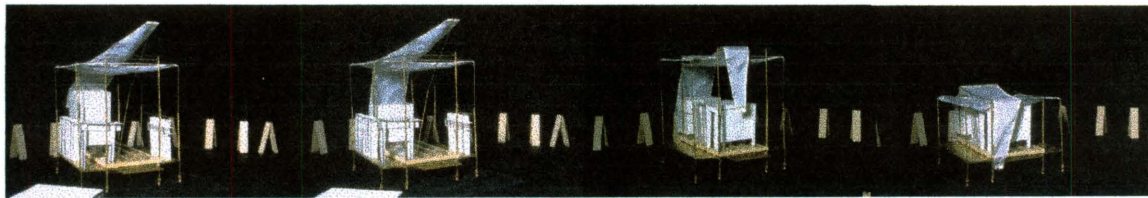
waxing crescent

first quarter



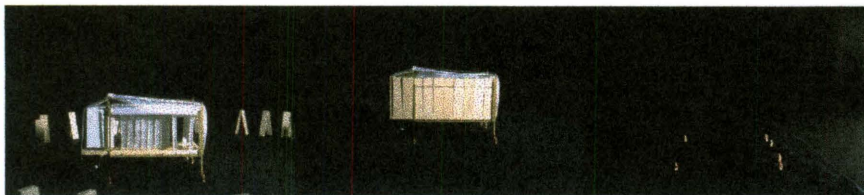
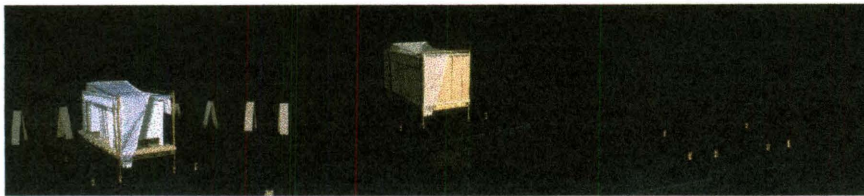
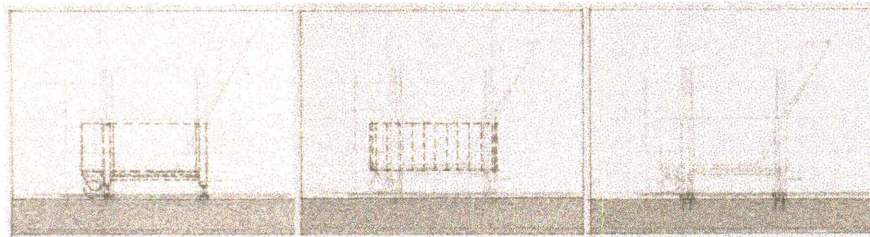
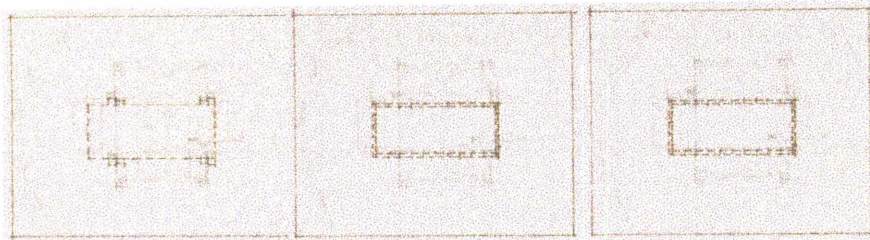
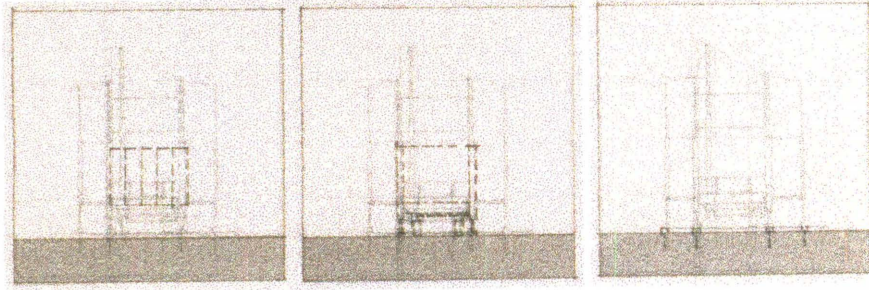
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waxing gibbous

full moon

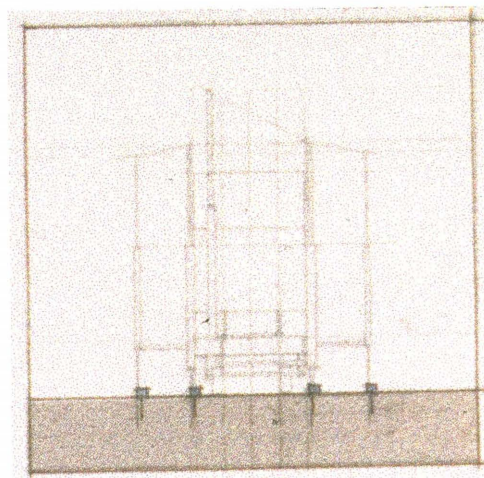


full moon

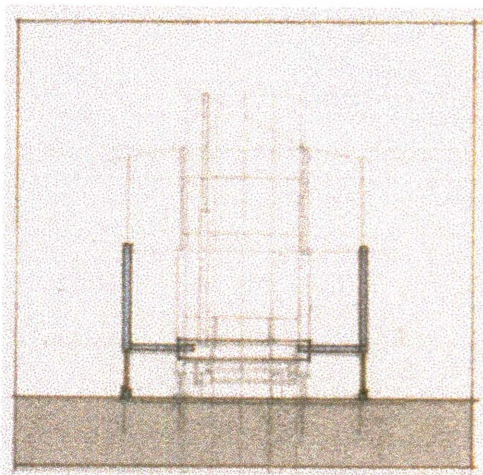
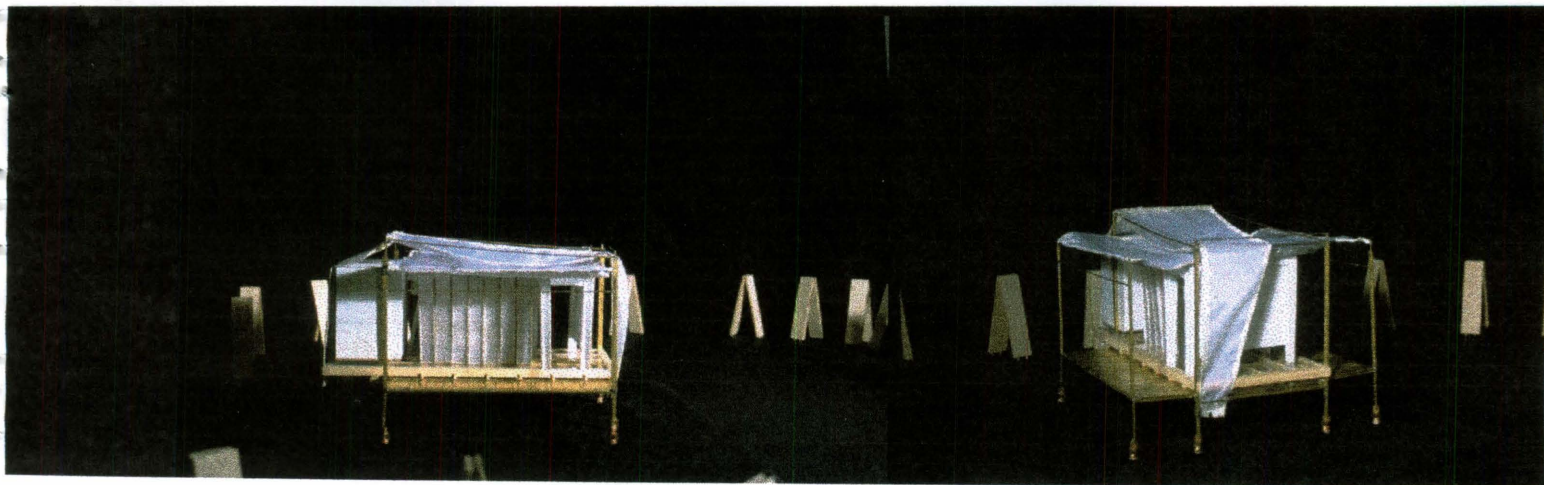


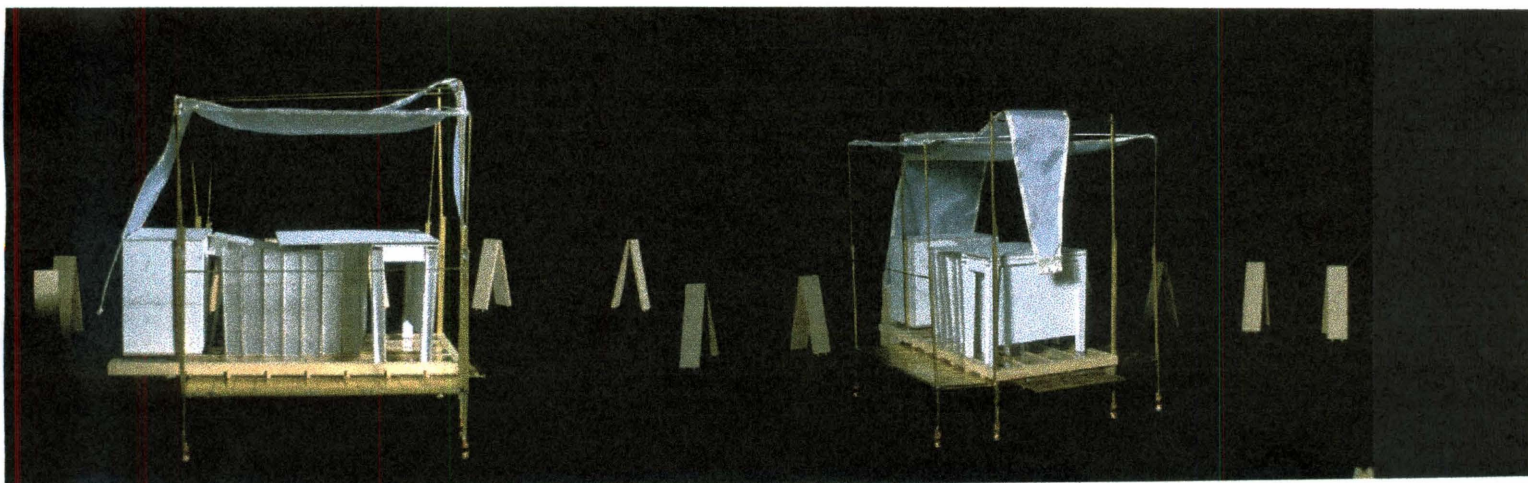
39

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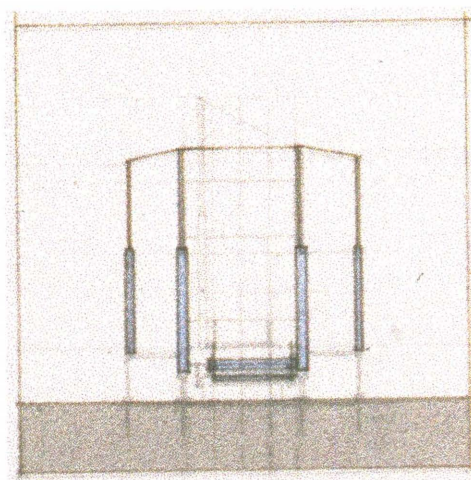
last quarter

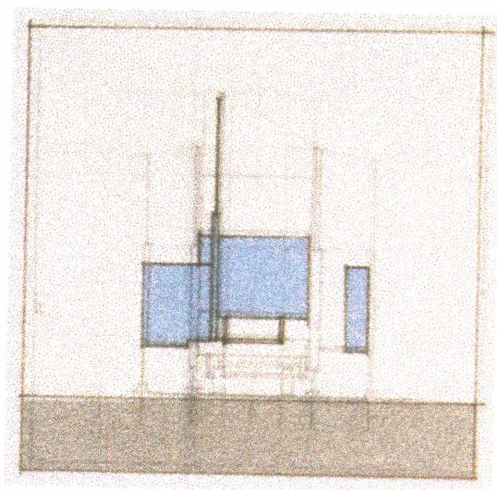
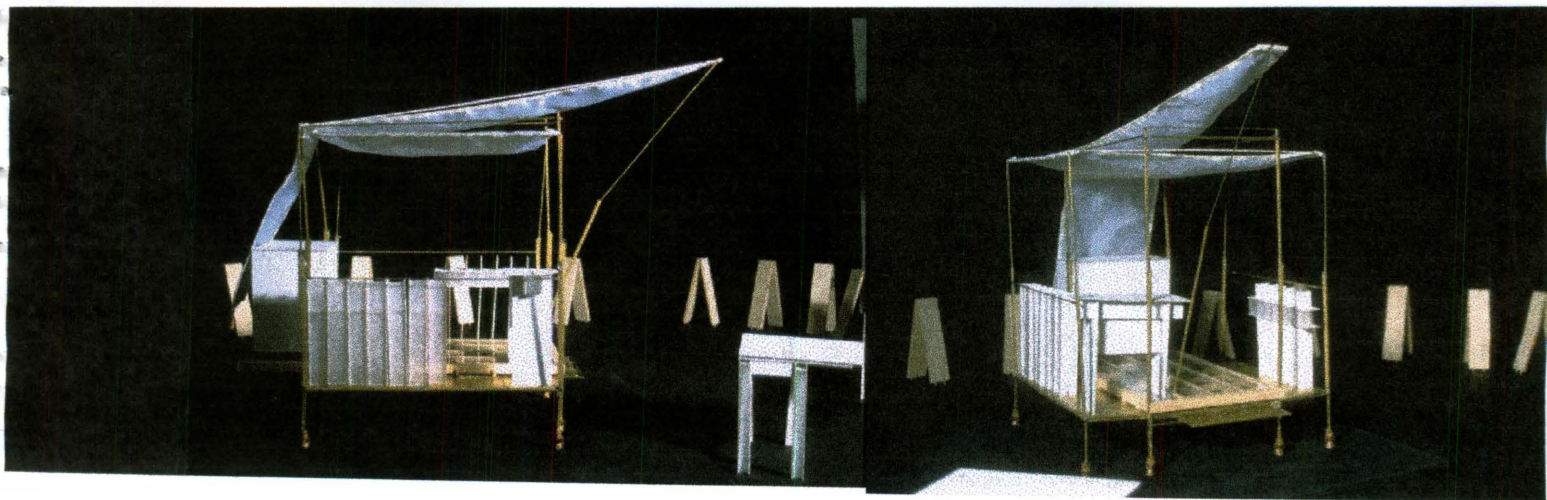




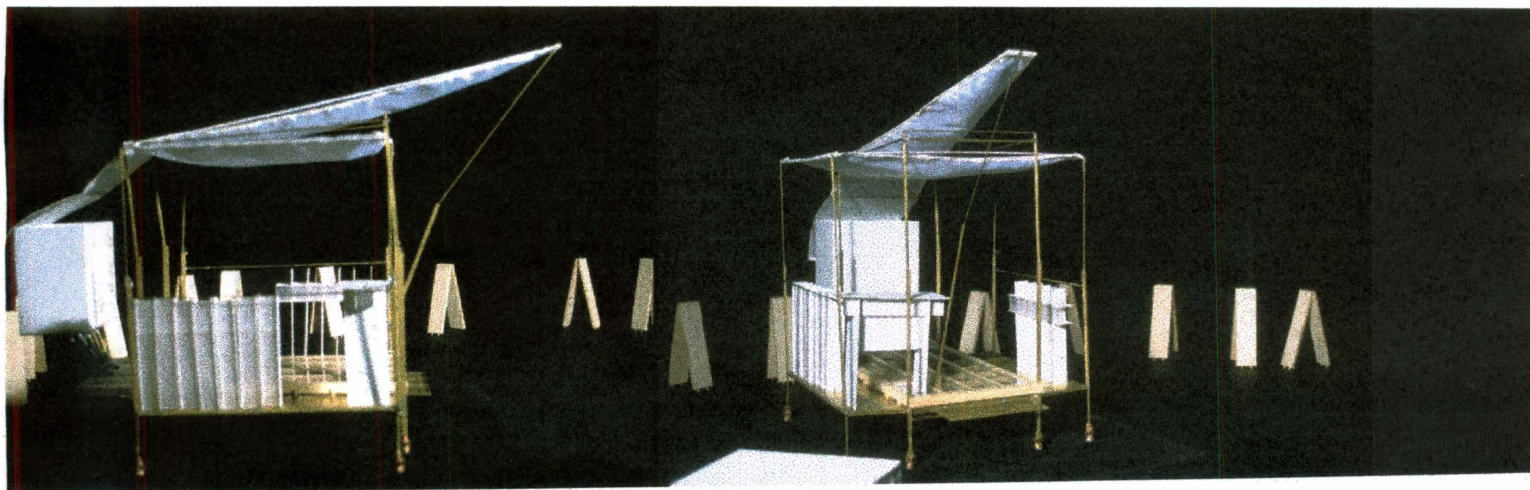
43

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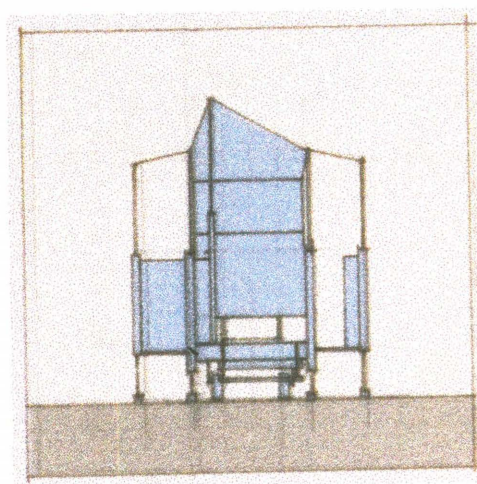


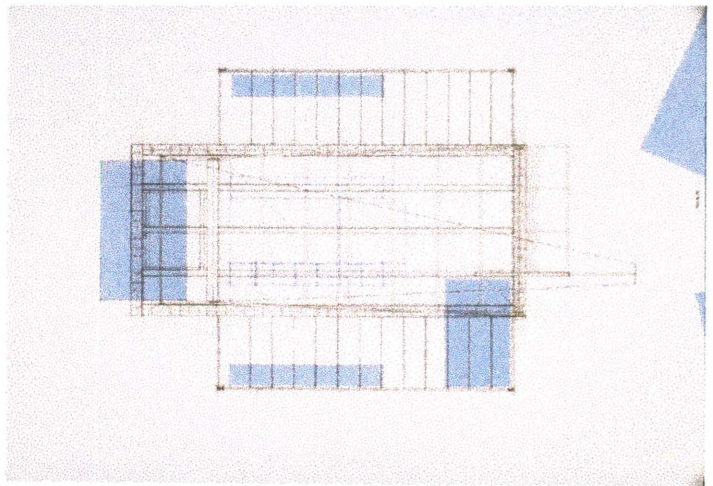
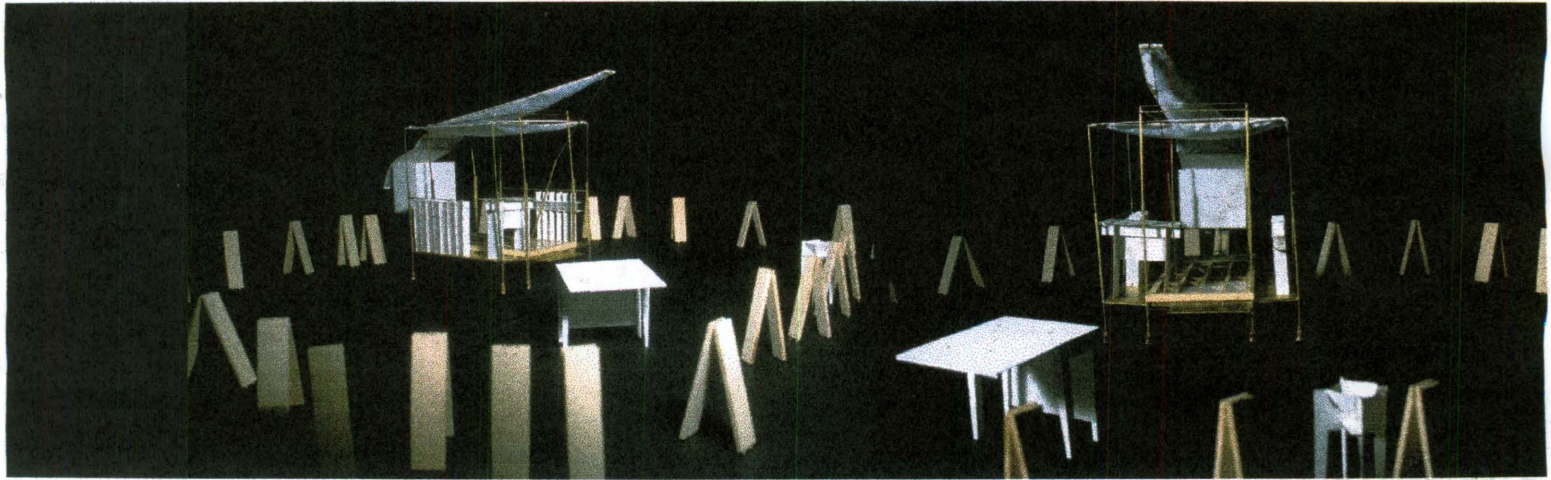
new moon



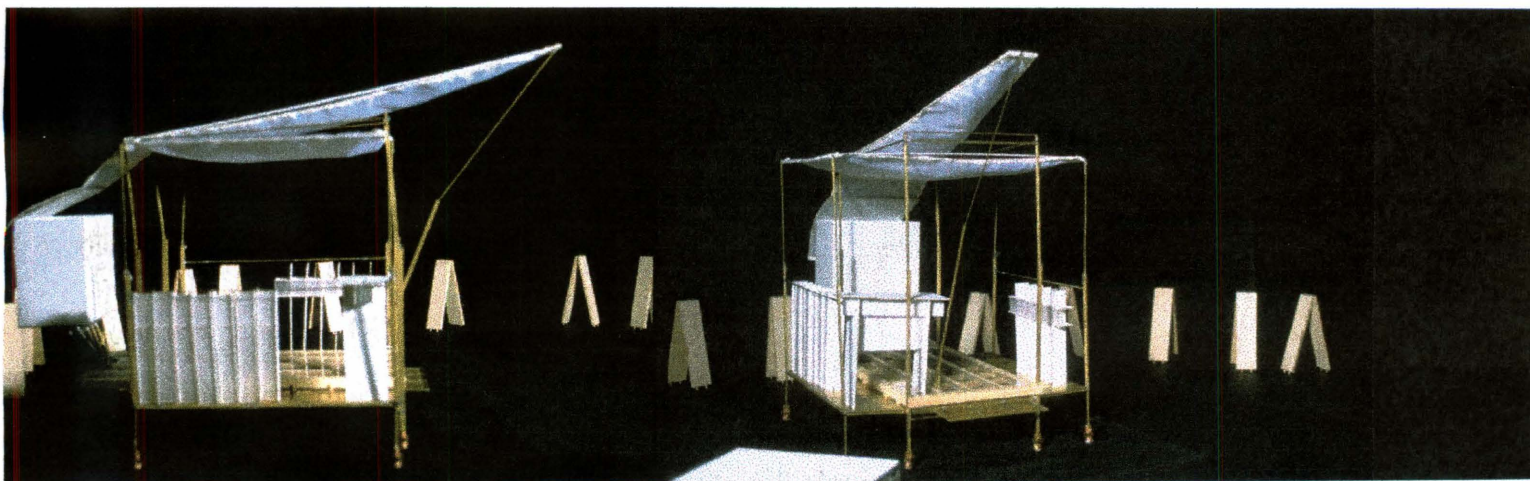
45

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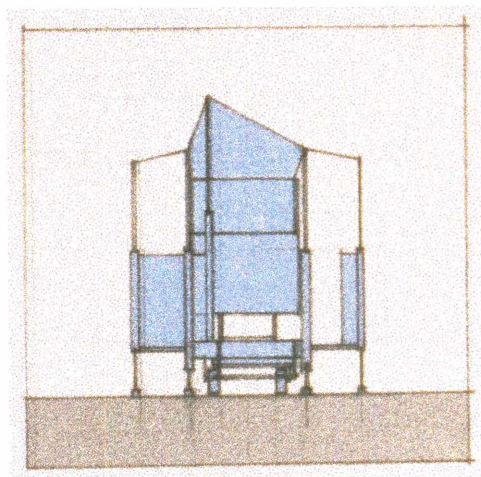


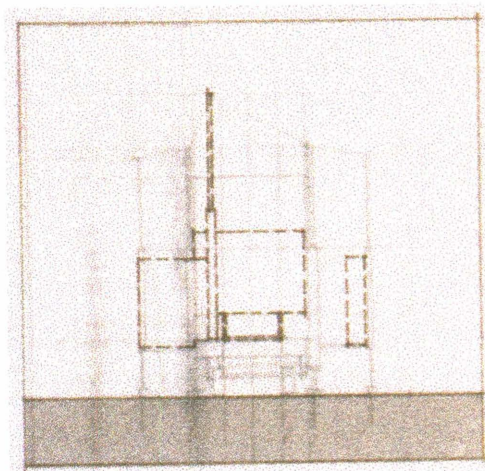
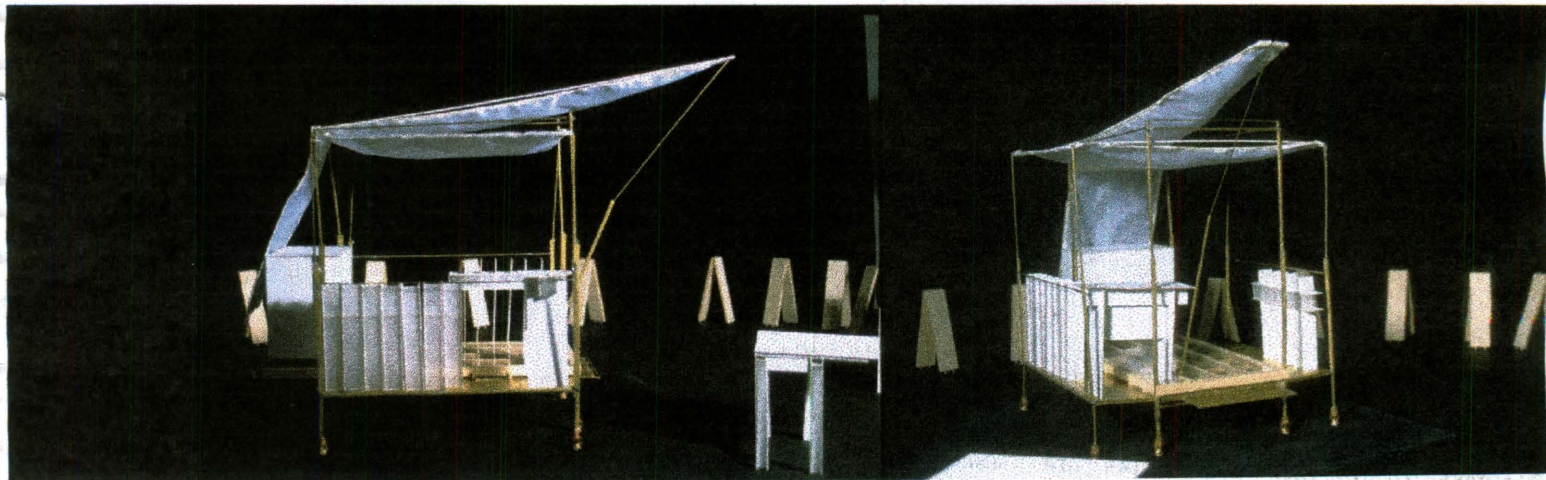
new moon

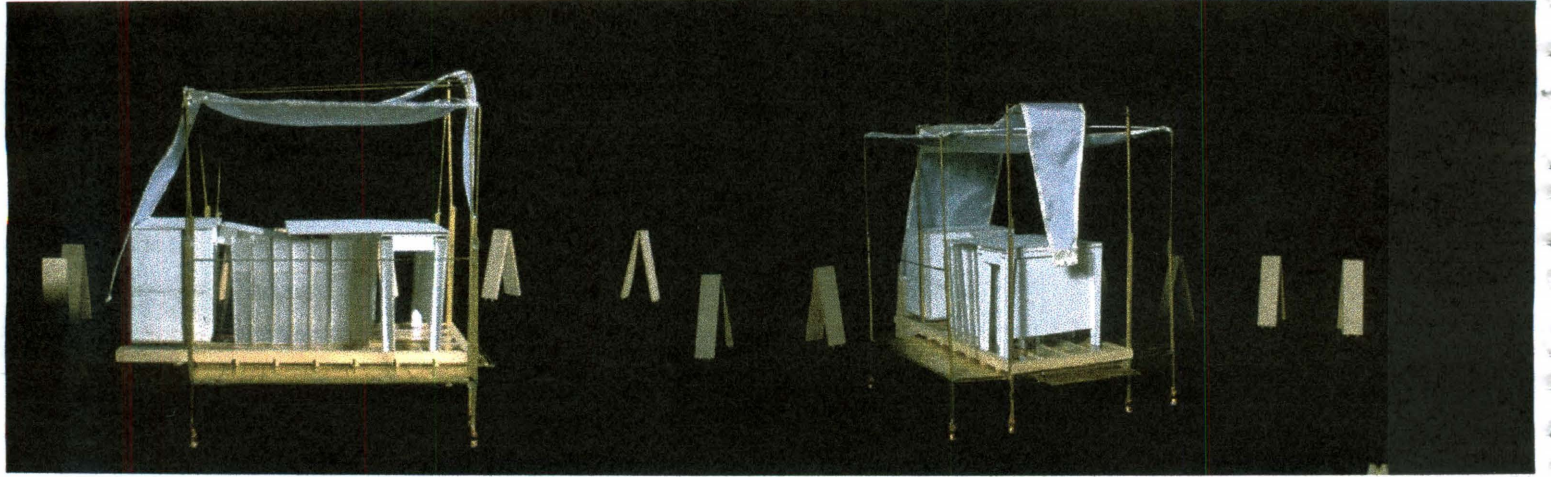


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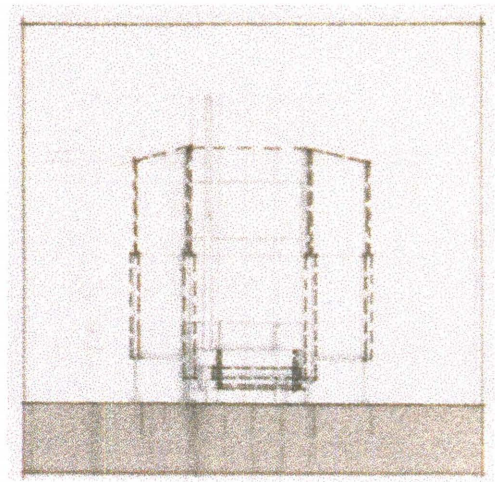




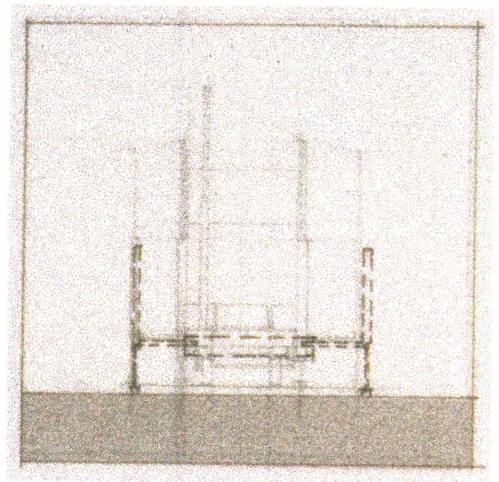
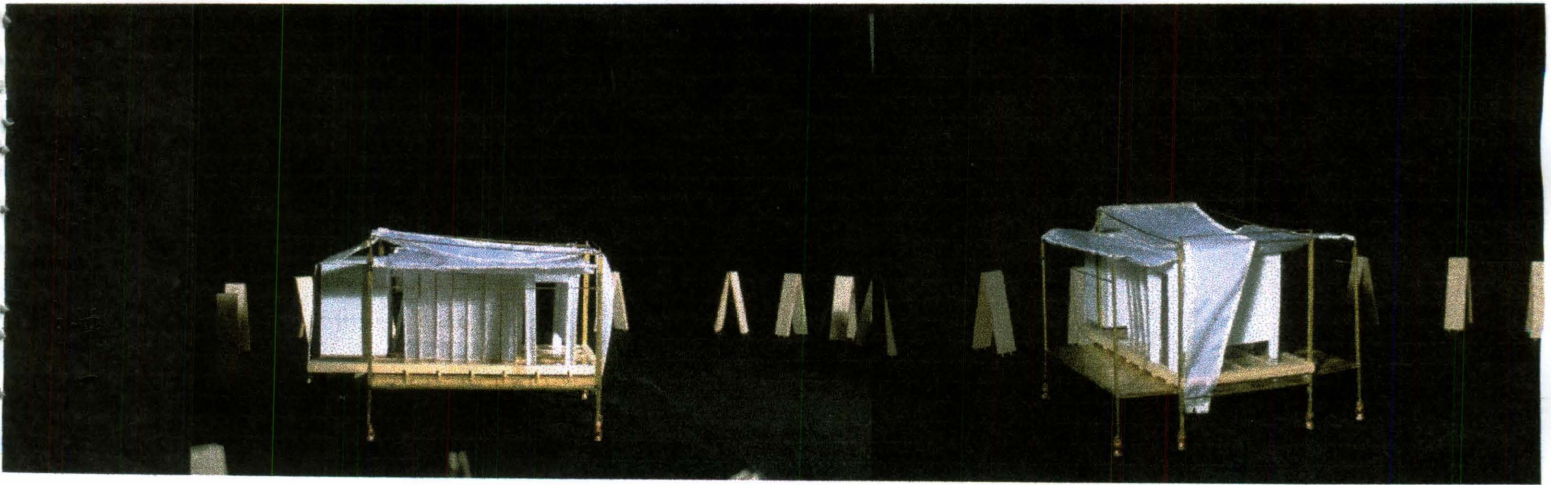


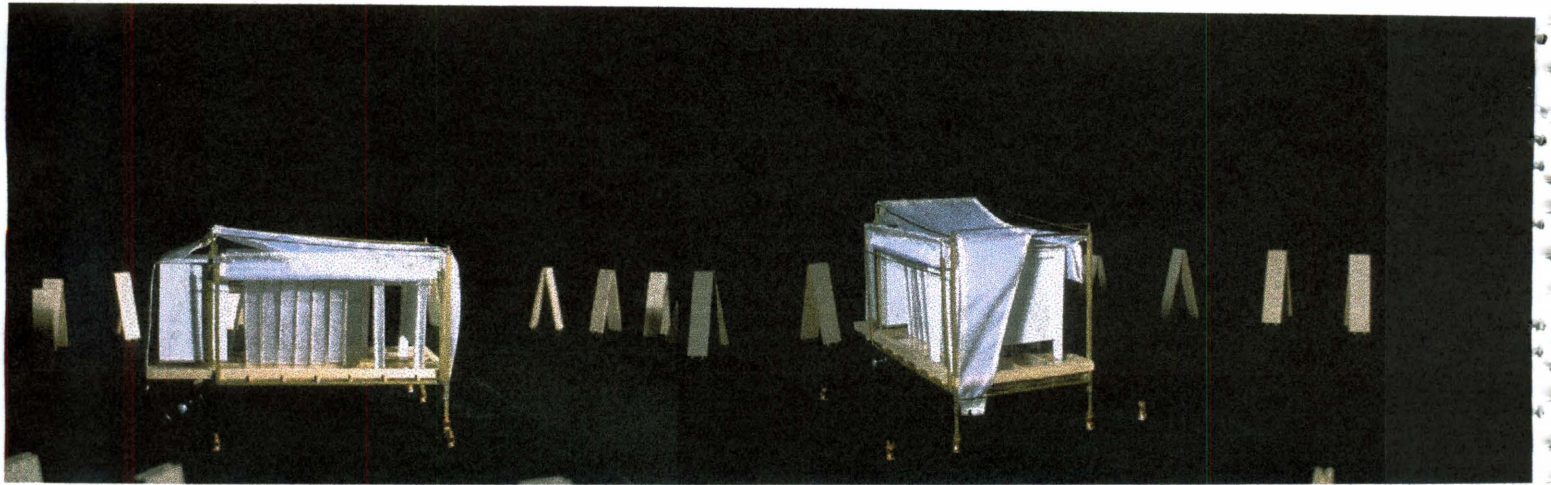
49

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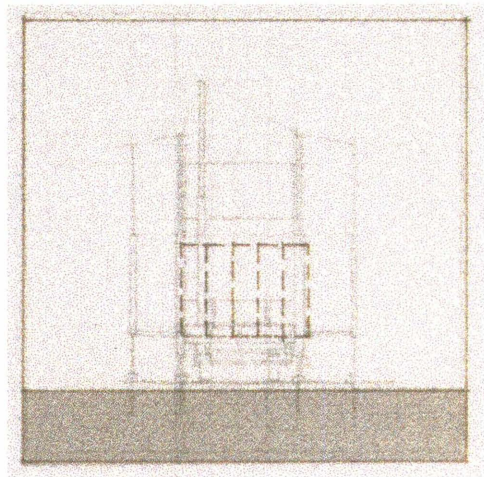
first quarter

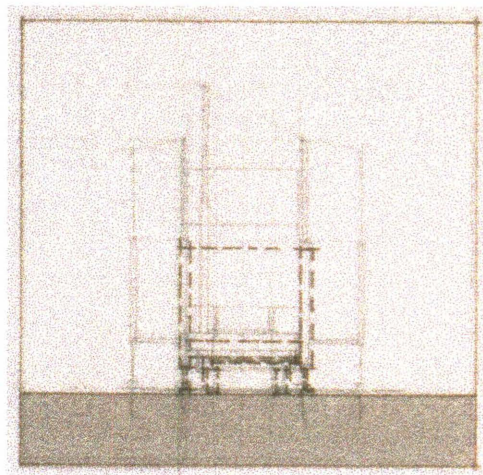
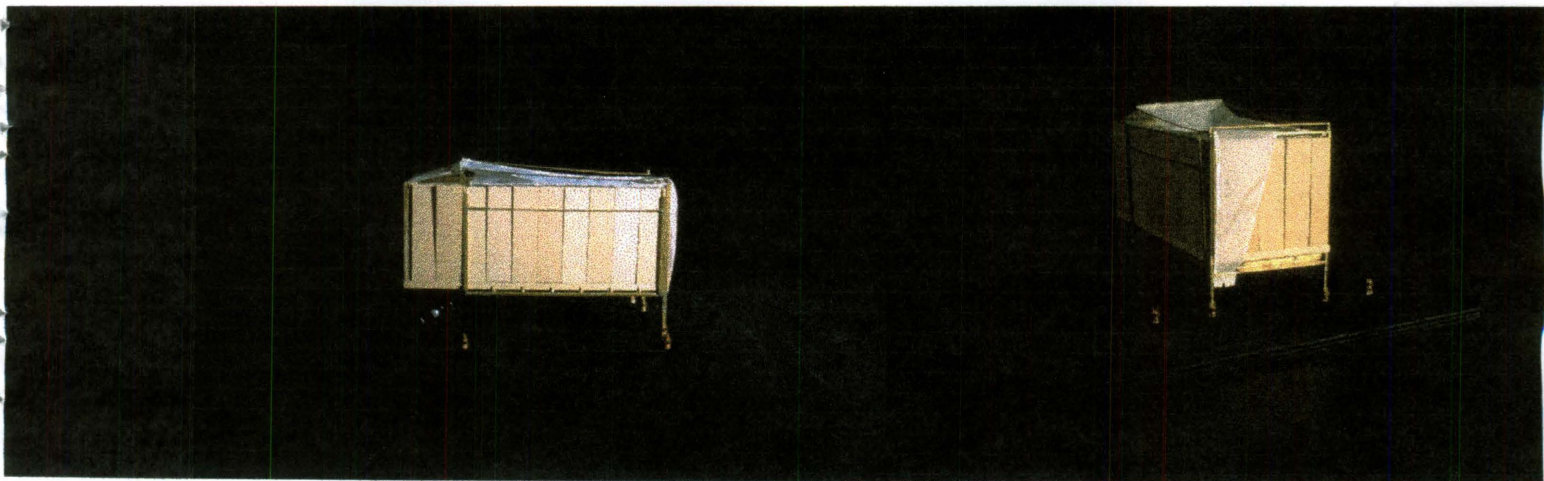




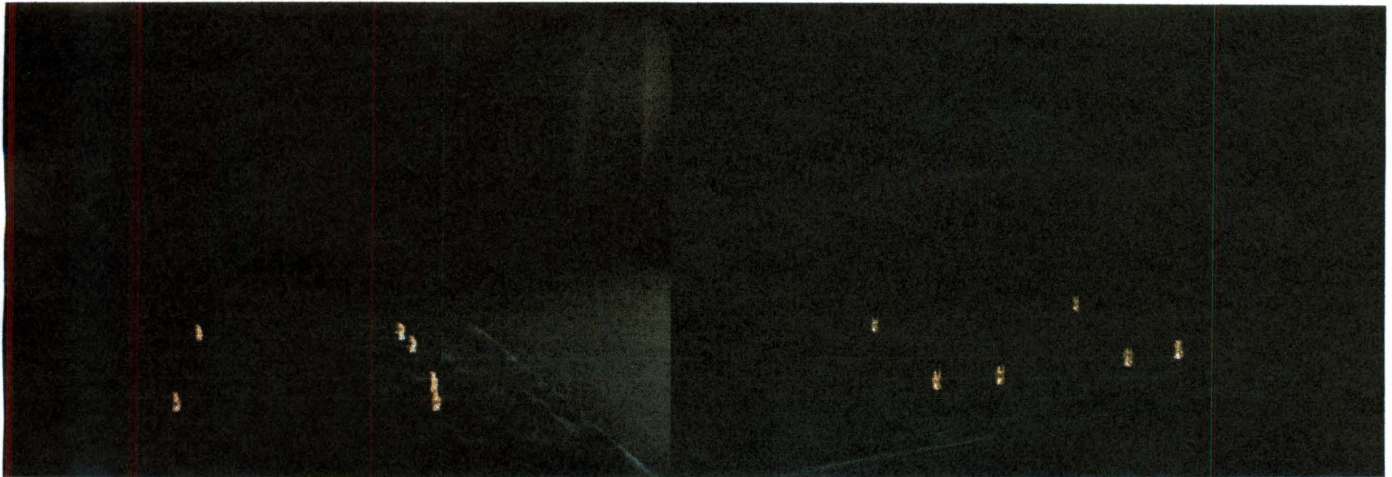
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Allison Zuchman



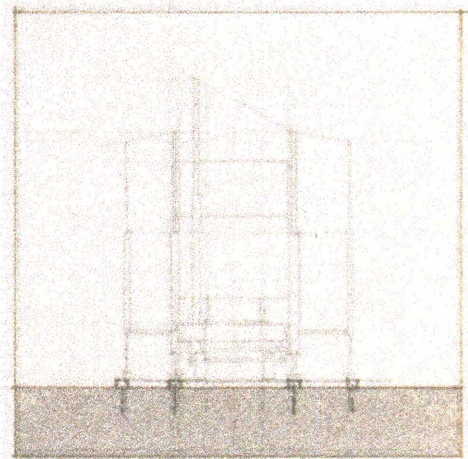


full moon



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Allison Zuchman



the cycle begins again at a new site . . .

ENDNOTES

1. Ohrn, Karin Becker. **Dorothea Lange and the Documentary Tradition**. Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, LA. 1980, pg. 240.
2. Trachtenberg, Alan. **Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans**. Hill and Wang, 1989, chapter 5, pg. 237.
3. Baier, Lesley K., **Walker Evans at Fortune**. Wellesley, MA: The Wellesley College Museum , 1977, pg. 18.
4. Trachtenberg, *Ibid.*, pg. 246.
5. Mikellides, Byron, ed. **Architecture for People: Explorations in a New Humane Environment**. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980, pg 24.
6. King, Stanley. **Co-Design: A Process of Design Participation**. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989, pg. 3.
7. Mikellides, *Ibid* , pg. 148.

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